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Police check hospitals over 'backdoor euthanasia'

BY MICHAEL HORNSNELL

THE deaths of at least 50 hospital patients around Britain are being investigated by police and health officials amid allegations of a creeping tide of backdoor euthanasia.

Seven separate inquiries are looking into claims that doctors have withheld intravenous drips from dehydrated patients, often while they were under sedation, and left them to die from thirst. The patients involved were suffering from strokes, asthma, other common medical conditions and dementia. At least five hospitals — in Derby, Surrey,

Kent and Sussex — are at the centre of police inquiries as a result of relatives' complaints or nurses' whistleblowing, while others have been referred to the General Medical Council and health authorities.

The Crown Prosecution Service will soon decide whether to prosecute in two important cases in which doctors have been accused of manslaughter due to criminal negligence. In the most serious of these, police are investigating 40 deaths at the Kingsway Hospital in Derby, where nurses claimed that dementia sufferers on a psycho-geriatric ward were starved and dehydrated

until they became so weak that they died from infections.

The inquiry was launched in November, 1997 after junior nurses complained, and papers relating to patients at the hospital between 1993 and 1997 are expected to be sent to the CPS in the spring.

In general, the practice of denying nutrition and fluids to patients diagnosed as entering the final phase of a terminal illness is defended as "helping nature to take its course". But some doctors condemn it as involuntary euthanasia.

The cases of patients in persistent vegetative state (PVS) such as the

Hillsborough disaster victim Tony Bland, must be referred to the courts. But a grey ethical area allows doctors to "exercise their clinical judgment" in other cases.

Sources in the medical profession suggest that some may be using that discretion to keep patients quiet and acquiescent on the wards. Some who have had a momentary choking fit, for example, have then been put on a nil-by-mouth regime, sedated and left to dehydrate.

Dr Gillian Craig, a retired consultant geriatrician from Northampton, has told the Royal College of Physicians that water and food

are basic human needs that should not be regarded as treatment that a doctor may give or withhold. "Sadly there are times when sedation without hydration seems tantamount to euthanasia."

"This strengthens the hand of those who are pressing to legalise physician-assisted suicide. Good palliative medicine is a major defence against euthanasia, but please heed my warning. Sedation without hydration has enormous potential for misuse. I would like to see this regime consigned to the dustbin of history."

"Attention to hydration is not

merely an option, it should be a basic part of good medicine."

Another case being considered by the CPS concerns the death of an 81-year-old woman who was admitted to hospital in Surrey in May 1997 for treatment for constipation and a urine infection. Her health was otherwise good. She was denied intravenous fluids, in spite of the pleading of relatives.

At one stage a hospital crash team, called at her daughter's insistence by a doctor previously unconnected with the case, carried out emergency measures that required cutting into her neck and groin ar-

teries to insert fluid lines. But septicaemia and multiorgan failure had by then set in. Her daughter said: "This was not a dying patient when she was admitted. In fact she was a relatively healthy lady, full of fun, with a relatively common problem. Six days later she was on her death bed as a direct result of dehydration. I had literally begged them with my hands pressed together in supplication to rehydrate her."

The issue of withholding or withdrawing treatment has been taken

Continued on page 2, col 5

Leading article, page 17

Saddam tries to lure US jets into trap

FROM DAMIAN WHITWORTH IN WASHINGTON

AMERICAN fighter aircraft attacked Iraqi planes in the air for the first time for six years yesterday after Saddam Hussein apparently tried to lure the Western pilots into a trap.

Six air-to-air missiles were fired at warplanes in the southern no-fly zone, which was being patrolled by F14 Navy jets and F15 fighters. Iraqi MiG and Mirage warplanes committed eight separate violations with between 13 and 15 planes yesterday, but none appeared to have been shot down in the two skirmishes in which missiles were fired — although one is thought to have crashed after running out of fuel.

The Pentagon suspected that Saddam was trying to lure American planes into areas where they would be vulnerable to surface-to-air missiles or surprise attack from other aircraft, but the spokesman Ken Bacon said that American pilots were trained to deal with that.

Yesterday's incidents followed two missile batteries in eight days. Saddam has said that Baghdad will no longer recognize the no-fly zones in northern and southern Iraq.

set up after the 1991 Gulf War to protect Kurds in the north and Shiites in the south. But Mr Bacon saw the transgressions as a sign that the Iraqi leader was frustrated and that the mistakes of Operation Desert Storm had done more damage to his military infrastructure than had been thought.

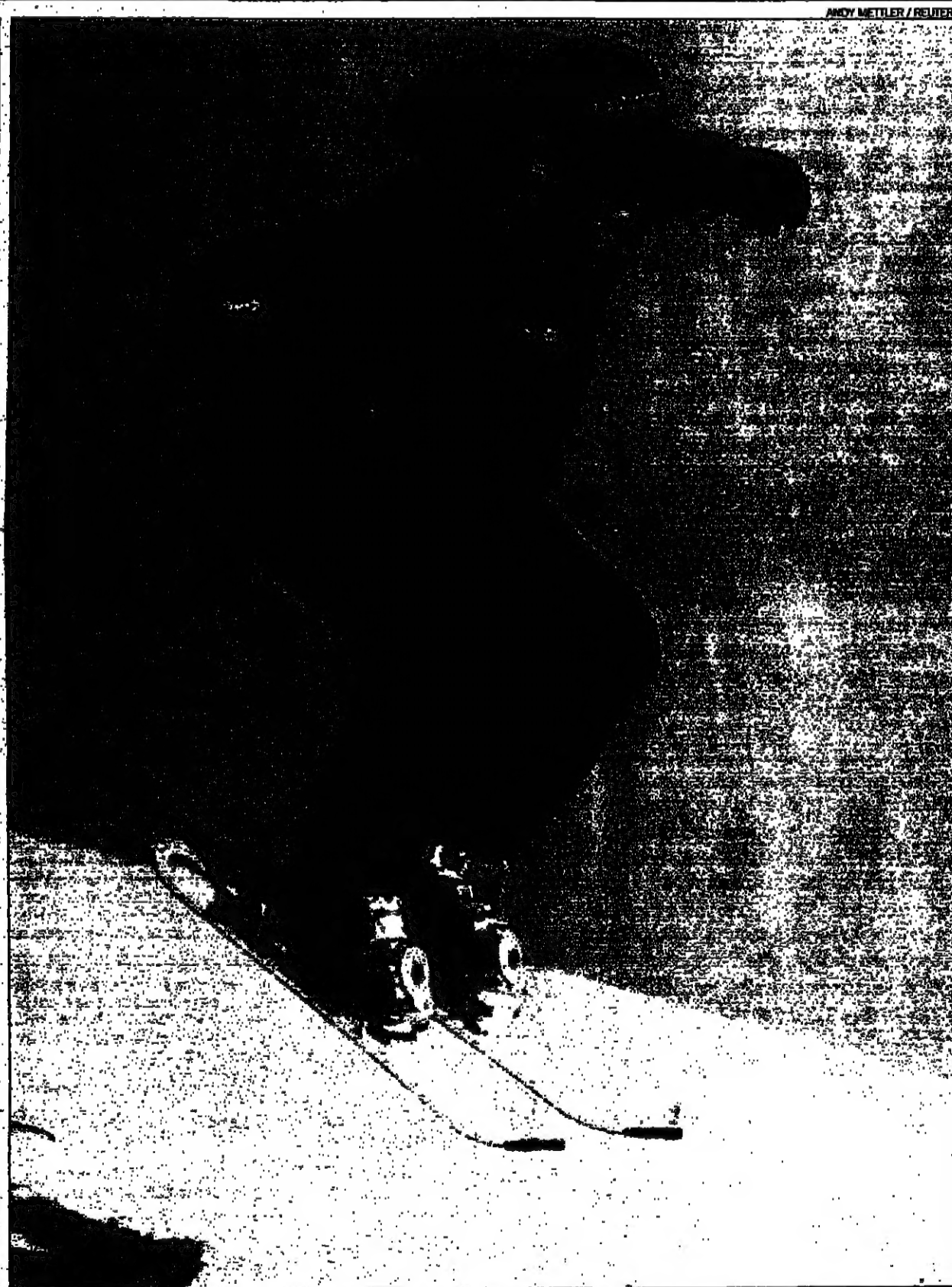
Reporting yesterday's incident, an Iraqi military spokesman said: "The hawks of our brave air force confronted and clashed with the aggressive American and British planes at 10.22 (0722 GMT) and the enemy planes withdrew. All the planes of our air force returned to their bases safely."

At the same time, Saddam urged Arabs to overthrow their leaders if they were allied to America. "Revolt against foreign powers, their aggression and their armies and chase them. Kick out injustice and its perpetrators," he said in a speech to mark the anniversary of the foundation of the Iraqi army. "Revolt against those who boast of friendship with the United States, those who are guided by (US Defence Secretary) William Cohen."

"The dwarves on their thrones will be forced to hear you, or else they will step down to give way for the people to say their opinion and take their action."

The city of Jerusalem was a "humiliated hostage" and the holy Muslim city of Medina, in Saudi Arabia, was "wounded" by the presence of foreign soldiers and their spears. Look around to see how mischievous persons have humiliated your sacred places which are now trodden by foreign powers after conniving with them so as to hit the great Iraq of Jihad," Saddam said.

The renewed military action came as the White House continued with preparations for Mr Clinton's trial by the Senate, which opens tomorrow. The hearing, once expected to be over by next week, is now thought more likely to be a full-scale trial with witnesses, including Monica Lewinsky.



Prince Harry shows off his jumping skills on a pair of 3ft snowblades during a photocall at Klosters yesterday

Prince Harry takes to the air with the latest skiing craze

BY ALAN HAMILTON

PRINCE HARRY gave a powerful boost to the latest winter craze of snowblading yesterday when he executed a small but perfect ski jump in front of the world's media and landed on his feet unaided by the steady influence of poles.

There was no mistaking the generation gap between the 14-year-old Prince and his 50-year-old father as they performed their ritual photocall for the press during their annual skiing holiday at Klosters in the Swiss Alps. The Prince of Wales led off with a small and cautious jump from a modest snow hummock using conventional skis and poles.

But his son quickly outshone him. Wearing a pair of 3ft snowblades, less than half the length of traditional skis, given to him by their French manufacturers, Harry soared a good two feet in the air, twice the altitude of his fa-

ther's effort, and landed without faltering.

Photocalls at Klosters are something of a tradition to the Prince and his sons, so much so that the shy Prince William elected to stay behind this year and join friends in Scotland. The Prince of Wales agrees to one brief meeting with the press in the hope that they will then leave him alone for the rest of his week's holiday.

Last year, in the wake of the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, the arrangement worked well. This year the Prince and his younger son, by performing tricks for the cameras, have given the media appetite for more.

In a brief and amicable exchange with reporters the Prince was asked whether he or his son was the better skier. "That is not a fair question; I suspect youth has the advantage," he replied. Asked if he would be sending a postcard to Prince William, the Prince

wryly replied: "I think William will be able to read about it."

Prince Harry is emerging as an enthusiastic and competent skier, more Harry the Hawk than Eddie the Eagle. Last year he tried Big Foot fun skis: this year he has mastered snowblades, described by

their makers as the snow equivalent of in-line skating, slightly wider and more flexible than regular skis.

The main advantage of snowblades over the Big Foot skis is speed. Their manoeuvrability also make them good for flips and jumps and snowbladers are set to rival snowboarders for tricks on the snowboarding parks springing up in Alpine resorts. Purists turn their noses up at snowblades as they sink in deep powder snow.

Snowblades do not have the normal ski binding which releases the foot when the wearer falls. Instead they have an adjustable binding which keeps boot and ski together whatever happens.

The Princes are accompanied on their holiday by Tiggy Legge-Bourke, a former nanny to the Prince's children, and Tara Palmer-Tomkinson, the so-called "IT" girl whose parents are long-standing skiing partners of the Prince.



Aden orders out anti-terror Yard squad

FROM DANIEL MCGORRY IN ADEN

TWO Scotland Yard detectives were told last night to leave Aden on the first available flight after being refused permission to interview the leader of the gang that abducted 16 Western hostages.

The order to leave the port city came hours after the Governor of Aden promised the anti-terrorist detectives full co-operation. The sudden change of heart by the Yemenis may well cause a serious diplomatic rift. The joint Scotland Yard and FBI investigation becomes meaningless if the detectives cannot question Abu Hassan or the three terrorists arrested in Aden for trying to blow up British targets.

British diplomats were stunned by the order from Aden's security chief, General Mohammed Saleh Taraili, who had been prepared to let police visit the scene of the gunfight in which four hostages died. The FBI and the Yard detectives have not yet been ordered out of Yemen. But that may happen if diplomatic relations worsen today.

Swift retaliation is expected

from Whitehall and Washington, who fear Yemen is being used as a base by Islamic terrorists.

The FBI is convinced the kidnap last week was carried out by Islamic terrorists funded and trained by the Saudi billionaire Osama bin Laden, who is accused of being behind a series of bombings on Western targets.

Diplomats will try to get senior Yemeni officials to change their minds today, but the two detectives are returning to the capital Sanaa. The Foreign Office has already strongly criticised the Yemeni government for their handling of this affair.

The Yard detectives have now spent four days being refused any access to any of the key figures involved in the recent terrorist atrocities. The Yemeni authorities fear the Yard team will uncover embarrassing links with major terrorist groups, including bin Laden, whose family have investments in the country.

Port deal, page 12

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Whelan tipped for job at union

CHARLIE WHELAN, the Chancellor's departing spin-doctor, is tipped for a job with the Transport and General Workers' Union.

Rather than turning his back on frontline politics following a turbulent 20 months in the Treasury, the move would allow the controversial Mr Whelan to remain closely involved in the Westminster scene.

Speculation about such a move has already prompted fears in government circles that Mr Whelan, blamed by ministers for leaking the details of Peter Mandelson's £373,000 home loan, could use the post to act as a thorn in the Government's side. One government

A job at the TGWU would keep Brown's former aide in touch, says Roland Watson

source, asked how Downing Street would react if Mr Whelan moved to the TGWU, said "with absolute horror".

Mr Whelan, said by friends to remain very committed to the world of organised labour, indicated yesterday that he was not looking for a lucrative job in the City, despite rumoured six-figure offers.

Another potential avenue - his hopes of securing a job with his beloved Tottenham Hotspur - also appeared to be dashed last night. Alan Sugar, the chairman of the Premier

League club, interrupted a holiday in the United States to say: "I have had no contact with Mr Whelan and I personally cannot conceive of any role for him at Tottenham."

But the possibility of Mr Whelan working for the TGWU is said to have been raised at the highest levels of the union. Bill Morris, the TGWU general secretary, is a close ally of Mr Brown, and the union has been a consistent supporter of the Chancellor.

Mr Whelan is highly regarded in union circles, both for his ideologi-

cal roots on the left - he is a former communist - and for his ability as a backroom fixer while working for the AEU.

However, such a high-profile return to his roots would unsettle those ministers who want his departure from the Treasury to draw a line both under the affair of Mr Mandelson's home loan and the often bitter personal rivalry between the camp-followers of Mr Brown and the Prime Minister.

Mr Whelan was last night expected to leave his job within days follow-

ing a day of concerted Tory attacks. The Opposition said it was untenable for him to remain in office so close to the March Budget after he had announced his resignation.

In comments interpreted by MPs as a signal to Mr Whelan not to delay his departure, Peter Kilroy, minister in the Cabinet Office, said he believed the spin-doctor would be leaving "sooner rather than later".

The job of the TGWU's senior press spokesman has been vacant since the summer and the union is currently undergoing an internal re-

organisation. Mr Morris told *The Times* last night that the possibility of Mr Whelan working for the union was a "hypothetical situation". He added: "You are asking me a question out of the blue. We have no need for a press officer and I do the hiring and firing around here."

Mr Whelan, who was unavailable for comment, will need the "agreement of the Crown" before he takes up any job outside Government.

The words are included in his contract, as they are for all special advisers employed by ministers. "The Crown" in this instance means Sir Andrew Turnbull, the Permanent Secretary at the Treasury.

Muslim protesters will dog Blair's trip to South Africa

TONY BLAIR'S first official visit to South Africa risks being overshadowed by demonstrations by angry Muslims protesting over Britain's decision to join in air attacks on Iraq last month.

Muslims against Global Oppression (MAGO) have threatened to hold a mass demonstration in Cape Town on Thursday and further protests in other areas.

The group has insisted that they will hound the prime minister throughout his visit, the first to South Africa since Mr Blair gained power. It has made clear that it is totally opposed to the bombing of Iraq and was "disgusted at the killing of innocent women and children."

Mr Blair's spokesman has said: "We will hound him wherever he goes." But Downing Street made clear last night that the prime minister would be taking no extra security personnel with him on his trip, despite fears of mass protests. A spokesman said that Mr Blair had been aware of the threats but had no intention of changing his personal security arrangements.

A spokesman said that the South African police would play a large role in ensuring adequate security during the visit and the prime minister was happy to rely on this, said the spokesman.

Demonstrators will hold mass meetings against air strikes, reports Jill Sherman

It is understood that security arrangements in South Africa are always very tight during visits of heads of state or government.

Mr Blair will be collected this morning from the Seychelles where he is holidaying with his wife and family, before flying to Pretoria for the start of his first visit to South Africa since he became prime minister.

The prime minister's spokesman insisted that there would be no extra cost to the taxpayer divert to the Seychelles on a chartered British Airways Jumbo jet.

The aim of the visit is to bid farewell to the outgoing President Nelson Mandela and strengthen ties with Thabo Mbeki, the deputy president who is likely to succeed Mr Mandela later this year.

During his visit Mr Blair will have several meetings with Mr Mbeki to discuss new

investment and defence orders and an aid package for South Africa and the whole continent.

Mr Blair's spokesman said that the two men would discuss defence orders worth over £1 billion which covered a range of equipment and had already involved extensive negotiations.

The spokesman also suggested that the trade links between the two countries could be supported by up to £4 billion in extra British investment.

The prime minister is determined to further develop Britain's relations with South Africa and Africa as a whole. He will be discussing his government's "Third Way" approach which was similar to some policy thinking in South Africa.

The prime minister will also ask President Mandela to continue applying pressure to persuade Colonel Gaddafi to agree a trial in The Hague for the two Libyans suspected of the Lockerbie Pan Am jet bombs. In addition give President Mandela a detailed background on Britain's decision to join the US in the raids on Iraq.

During his visit he will also meet British defence advisers who have been helping to reconstruct South Africa's defence forces into a volunteer army capable of playing key peacekeeping roles.



The white-tailed eagle had virtually vanished from Scotland until the reintroduction programme started in 1968.

Eagle off the danger list

THE magnificent white-tailed eagle is back in such numbers in Scotland that it was removed from the official list of rare birds yesterday.

Britain's largest native bird of prey suffered from the attentions of trophy hunters and sheep farmers to such an extent throughout the 19th century that the population dwindled rapidly, with the last pair

breeding on Skye in 1916. Only the odd migrant was seen on British shores until 1968, when a project to reintroduce the white-tailed eagle, also known as the sea eagle, was launched on Rhum in the Inner Hebrides using birds from Norway.

The huge birds - scientific name *Haliaeetus albicilla* - slowly but surely began to re-

establish themselves and breed in small numbers. Now half a dozen pairs are breeding successfully in a good year - enough for them to be removed from the official list of the British Birds Rareities Committee.

□ The Savit's warbler is the latest officially endangered bird after numbers plummeted to one or two pairs.



Savit's warbler: endangered

Care in community no threat, say psychiatrists

By SUSIE STEINER

PSYCHIATRISTS provoked anger yesterday by saying that care in the community had had no effect on the number of murders committed by the mentally ill.

Research by two forensic psychiatrists for the Institute of Psychiatry showed a steady drop in the proportion of murders committed by the mentally ill since the 1950s, despite the closure of mental hospitals and the adoption of community care.

"There is a great anxiety that, with the advent of community care, that all of us become much more vulnerable," said Professor Pamela Taylor, one of the report's authors, at a

press conference yesterday. "The figures simply don't support that. There is no evidence to support the notion that community care has influenced the figures or made society a more dangerous place."

While around 40 people are killed each year by people with mental disorders, the researchers emphasised that around 4,000 died annually on Britain's roads.

Michael Howlett, director of the Zito Trust, said: "To compare the chances of being killed by a mentally ill person with the chances of being killed in a car crash is not only meaningless but insensitive to the feelings of families who

have been bereaved. What the death of Jonathan Zito in 1992 exposed in graphic detail was the failure of services to cope with seriously difficult patients who are abandoned by those responsible for their welfare."

"It is remarkable that psychiatrists, who have been as vociferous as anyone in their criticism of Government policy, should now appear to be saying that root-and-branch reform is not necessary."

Marjorie Wallace, chief executive of SANE, said: "It benefits no one to ignore the flaws of a system whose failings are exposed time and again when a tragedy is investigated."

Shifting views on euthanasia

FORTY years ago, when I was a junior hospital doctor, the ethics that determined our care for the elderly and the terminally ill were well understood. We didn't need a High Court decision, welcome as the recent one has been, to allow us to use adequate doses of analgesia to control pain, albeit that the side-effects might shorten the patient's life. However, even if we didn't strive officiously to keep patients alive by overtreating those who

lives had become a misery, we did nothing to shorten a life deliberately when the only objective was the earlier death of the patient. Older doctors are shocked at the idea of deliberately dehydrating patients.

All doctors realise that there

are patients who are unlikely to make a good recovery but are likely to survive. A problem is that, whereas to a young doctor the quality of life of these patients may seem so low as to be not worth keeping, most of the patients are

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patients who are unlikely to make a good recovery but are likely to survive. A problem is that, whereas to a young doctor the quality of life of these patients may seem so low as to be not worth keeping, most of the patients are

very grateful for what life they have. Research has shown that the criteria considered in warranting euthanasia by people who believe in it when they are young and active become much more stringent once the person questioned is older and nearer death.

If fluids are withdrawn death is inevitable from dehydration within days. If the patient is conscious the only way of saving them the discomfort, pain and restlessness that would precede their death is to tranquillise them, even if the sedatives prescribed will further hasten their end. If the same sedatives were given as one massive dose nobody would have any doubts that this was euthanasia, and even if they are given in smaller doses over a period of time, the end result is the same.

It is ironic that before a life-support machine can be turned off in the case of someone who, for instance, has suffered an irreparable head injury, the procedures that have to be fulfilled are exhaustive, and the decision is taken at the highest level.

If, on the other hand, fluids are to be withheld so that the patient will surely die, this may be at the behest of junior staff.

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Police check hospital deaths

Continued from page 1

up by the British Medical Association in a huge consultation exercise and the association's medical ethics committee hopes to produce practical guidelines when it is complete.

The consultation paper, *Withdrawing and Withholding Treatment*, asks whether food and drink might be withdrawn from patients such as severely impaired stroke victims as well as those in a persistent vegetative state.

But Dr Craig said: "This is already happening without any regulation whatsoever. Moreover, the BMA are clearly aware of this. It can happen

when the carers have reached the limit of their resources and are no longer able to stand patients' problems without anxiety, guilt or anger. A sedative will alter the situation and produce a patient who, if not dead, is at least quiet."

She also spoke about the dangers of grouping together patients who might be misdiagnosed as terminally ill in institutions where staff are oriented towards death and non-intervention. She cited the case of an elderly man sent to hospital for terminal care with a diagnosis of cancer. The geriatrician felt the diagnosis was not well established and found the main problem was dehydration. With intravenous rehydration and intensive nursing, he recovered and went home for 18 months.

Some doctors are concerned over the distress dehydration can cause even in PVS patients. Dr Anthony Cole, a consultant paediatrician at Worcester Royal Infirmary and chairman of a Roman Catholic ethics committee, said: "There is some scientific evidence that, if the base of the brain is intact, patients will experience thirst even if the higher functions have been lost. Death from dehydration is painful and unacceptable."

Churches
The inter
son of

Police
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murd

Violent women
attack on quiet

Churches turn Che into the Son of God

THE image of the communist revolutionary Che Guevara is being used by Britain's Churches to represent Jesus Christ in the latest Easter advertising campaign.

The Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church have distanced themselves from the campaign, even though both denominations were represented on the ecumenical group behind it.

The poster of Che, who executed traitors in the jungle and once said he would "slit the throats of any enemy who falls into my hands", was also criticised by leading evangelicals and traditionalists. One leading bishop said it was especially misleading to portray a revolutionary image given the "neatly-mouthed comments" of bishops over the Iraq affair last month.

For the Churches' campaign, the world-renowned picture of Che Guevara has been overlaid with an image of Jesus from a classical painting to produce a black-and-white poster designed to help new Christians "discover the real Jesus".

The poster has clear overtones of the Alberto Korda photograph that has graced millions of student bedsits and T-shirts worldwide. Intended for church noticeboards, bus stops and advertising hoardings, it says: "Meek and Mild. As If. Discover the Real Jesus. Church, April 4."

The campaign was masterminded by the same Christian advertising executives who dreamed up the controversial "Bad Hair Day" Christmas campaign. An earlier Easter campaign had to be withdrawn because of copyright problems with the intended slogan, based on the X-Files.

Chris Bayfield, of the leading agency HBC, and Partners, which handles the Rev Peter Owen-Jones, Rector of Haslingfield, Cambridge, and a former advertising executive who was ordained priest in

Controversial advert claims

Jesus was a revolutionary, reports Ruth Gledhill

who worked on the Che poster with Trevor Webb of the agency DMB & B, said: "The traditional image of Jesus is a bit of a fairy in a white dress with a halo. The New Testament version is very different. Jesus is actually a revolutionary."

Mr Bayfield is a member of Christians in the Media, a group of about 30 advertising and marketing executives set up to help the churches promote themselves better.

He said he developed the poster by taking the image of Che Guevara and overlaying a classical painting of Christ. He found on an Internet site.

"Jesus was an angry man a lot of the time," he said. "He was not all sweetness and light. Those with a Sunday school view of Christianity might be shocked by it but anyone who reads the Bible regularly will not be."

The Christians in the Media team was overseen by the Churches Advertising Network, an ecumenical group with representatives from all the mainstream churches.

One member, the Rev Peter Owen-Jones, Rector of Haslingfield, Cambridge, and a former advertising executive who was ordained priest in

1995, admitted the advertisements were provocative. Referring to the Benetton campaigns, he said there was no intention on the network's part to cause offence. "We do not want to use shock tactics."

But he added: "The traditional Jesus has been seen as this meek and mild, almost ineffable figure. But he was crucified for being quite the opposite. We are not saying Jesus was a communist. We are saying Jesus was a revolutionary."

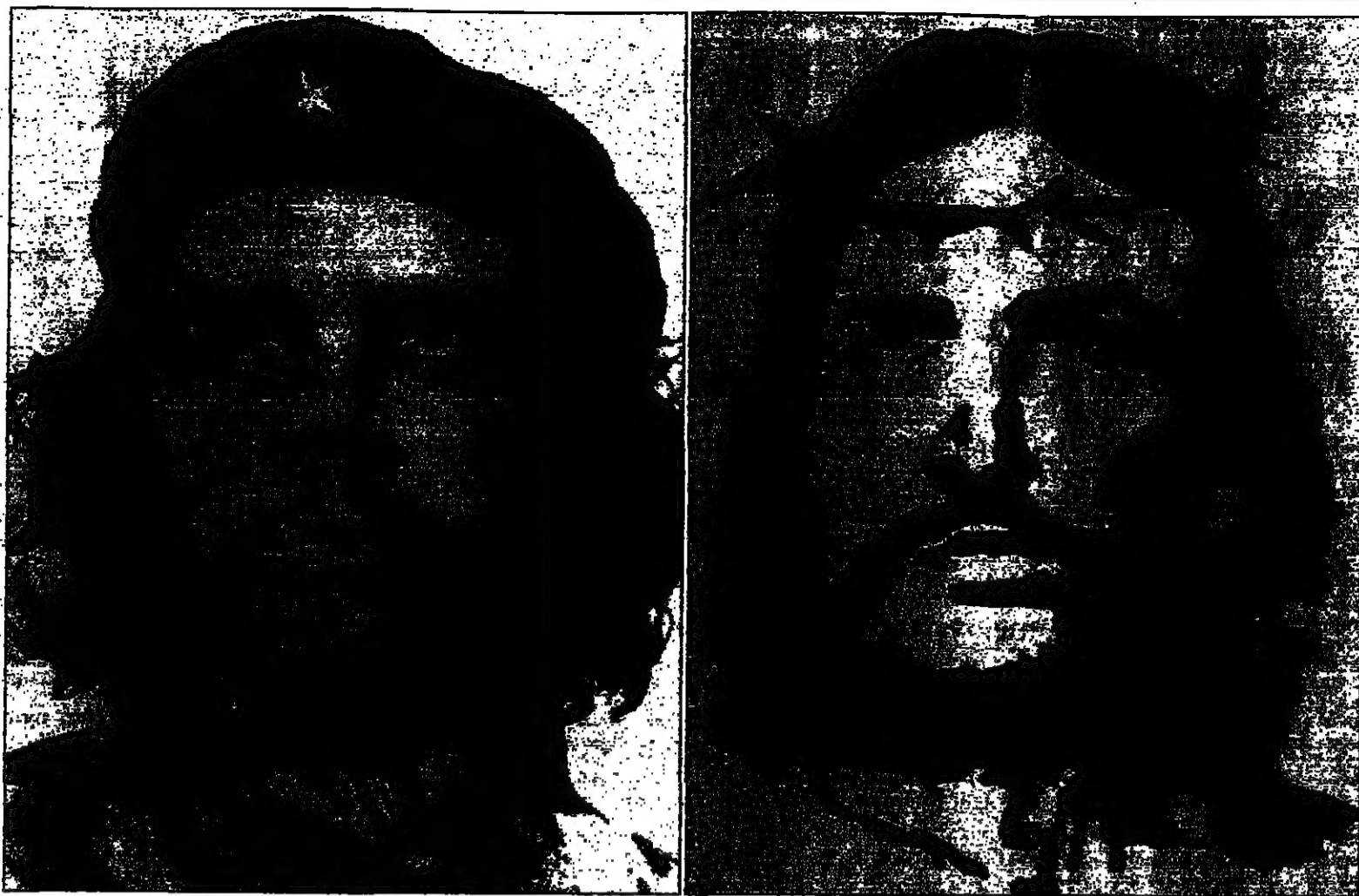
The Rev Tom Ambrose, of the Ely diocese and a member of the network, said the aim was to encourage people to challenge stereotypes: "We do not want to produce wallpaper, we want advertisements that will stand up and be noticed."

He said the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, had not been consulted. When he showed the poster to his own Bishop, Dr Stephen Sykes, of Ely, the response was "silence".

The network, set up in 1991 with a low-key advertising campaign in the Oxford diocese, is sending out 50,000 brochures to churches nationwide urging them to buy the £15 four-sheet posters, or A3 posters for £1 each, to put on their noticeboards.

The Right Rev Nigel McCulloch, Bishop of Wakefield and chairman of the Church of England communications committee, said: "There is a big difference between Che Guevara and Jesus. Some churches could bowl themselves out just by putting it up."

The Right Rev Noel Dehroy Jones, Bishop of Sodor and Man and former Chaplain of the Fleet, said he would be advising churches in his diocese not to use it. "This is a bad attempt to get people into church. I am not one for little yellow chicks and fluffy things at Easter, but I don't think this poster is the right message either."



Church leaders fear that the advertisement, reminiscent of the student posters of Che Guevara, will turn people away from the church

Barrister fined for harassing former girlfriend

By SUSIE STEINER

A SENIOR barrister harassed a female colleague with phone calls, letters and unsolicited visits in a bid to resume their affair, it was heard yesterday. Justin Webster, who frequently undertook cases for the Crown Prosecution Service, pleaded guilty to harassment charges at Huddersfield Crown Court. He now faces disciplinary action from the Bar Council.

The 37-year-old father of three pursued an affair with fellow barrister Rosamund Sheffield, 30, after the pair first met in April 1995. Stephen Hopkins, prosecuting, told the court that after a break-up in May 1996: "Even when Miss Sheffield formed a brief relationship with someone else, he was unrelenting in his pursuit."

The affair continued on and off until February last year. Webster was charged with harassing Miss Sheffield between February and May 1998.

"He telephoned her hundreds of times at all hours of the day and night and repeatedly wrote her letters... it was also occasionally abusive and threatening. It caused her great and obvious distress," Mr Hopkins said.

Webster, of Bayswater, London, once made 23 calls to her home within two hours. "He told her he had left a poisonous character reference about her at two or three sets of chambers which she wanted to join," said Mr Hopkins.

Edward Jenkins, defending, said: "It was a very passionate and difficult relationship. He did not ever seek to wreck Miss Sheffield's career."

Magistrate Christopher Pratt fined Webster £1,200 and banned him from contacting Miss Sheffield for two years.

Police facing mystery of murdered boy

By RICHARD DUCE

CHRISTOPHER SWALES was a 15-year-old boy with everything to live for. He was popular in his school and expected to do well in his forthcoming exams.

His battered body was found on Sunday partially buried on a beach at the Lincolnshire resort town of Skegness, police have been facing murder mystery. They have no clues as to how he came to be there. Their main lead is the receipt found on his clothing, which indicate that he spent some of the Saturday night before at a nightclub called 'The Sign'.

At the Earl of Scarborough School, which Christopher attended, pupils returned from their Christmas holidays to be told of his murder. Some have been counselled by teachers.

Steven Elliott, head teacher, said yesterday: "This really takes your breath away. I remember Chris laughing just before Christmas and now we have to get used to the fact that we're not going to see him again."

Mr Elliott said that Christopher was a bright, popular boy with a wide circle of friends. He was studying for ten GCSEs and teachers expected him to get some of the best results in the school.

It is understood that he had been staying with friends over the New Year weekend so his family did not consider him to be missing. Security video footage from the nightclub and tapes from cameras around the town centre have been collected for examination by detectives. Detective Superintendent Nick Howard, the officer leading the inquiry, said: "I would appeal to anyone who knows Christopher and saw him on Saturday evening or Sunday morning to contact the police as soon as possible."



Christopher Swales: body partially buried

Police search for evidence on the beach at Skegness

Drink mother had five children in car

By RUSSELL JENKINS

A WOMAN was three times over the drink-drive limit when her car carrying her five young children in the back crashed off a road, crashed into a field and burned over.

A police officer found Helen Dargue, 32, of Newbiggin-by-the-Sea, Northumberland, wandering dazed and distressed around the field. Her children were lying on a nearby grass verge. Her 11-year-old daughter had a broken arm and the other four, aged between three and 12, complained of cuts and bruises.

Dargue, who had been drinking with her husband earlier in the day, was placed on probation for 18 months, disqualified from driving for two years and ordered to pay £40 costs by magistrates at Bedlington, Northumberland, on Monday. She had admitted drink-driving.

The accident happened last November when the Renault Savanna car left the A189 spine road near Cramlington. A policeman found the car on its roof in a farmer's field.

A subsequent breath test showed that Mrs Dargue had 95 millilitres of alcohol in her blood, 60 millilitres above the legal limit. The court was told that Mrs Dargue was of good character and was extremely sorry for what she had done. It was entirely out of character.

John Lawson, for Dargue, said that she and her husband had been drinking to forget a "great personal loss" that she had suffered some years ago.

A spokeswoman for the Campaign Against Drink Driving suggested that a two-year driving ban was mild punishment for such a "stupid and irresponsible" action.

Driver 'hung head in shame'

Helen Johnstone on boy's admission at death crash scene

A STOLEN Range Rover that crossed the central reservation of a motorway into the path of a minibus, killing three people, was being driven by a 14-year-old schoolboy.

A survivor yesterday described how the boy sat with his head bowed, unable to look at emergency services battling to free the crash victims from the wreckage. Alicia Clair, a mother of four, said that he later admitted he had been driving.

Still shaken by the crash, Mrs Clair, 53, described the accident in which two women workmates and the minibus driver died on Monday. "Everybody was talking to each other about what they did on New Year's Eve and we were really happy and cheerful. I remember somebody shouting, 'Oh, my God.' I looked down the aisle of the bus and through the front

windscreen and there was a car hurtling towards us."

As she and the three boys in the Range Rover were being treated at the scene, she asked the schoolboy if he had been driving. "He said 'Yes' and just hung his head down in shame, looking at the ground. The driver looked young, but I was so shocked when I found out that he was only 14."

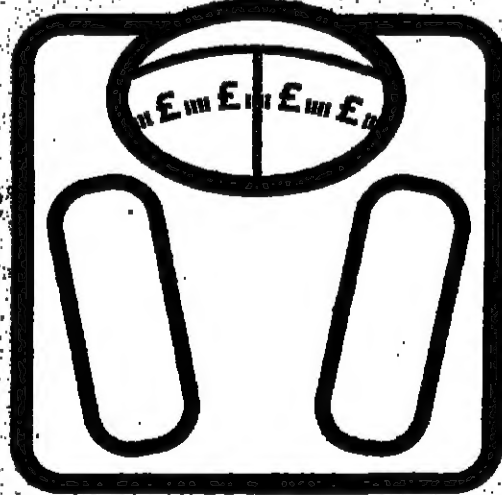
Hampshire Police yesterday confirmed that the Range Rover, which belonged to a friend of the boy's family and

had been parked outside his home in Clonfield, was reported stolen on Monday afternoon. The driver and two others, aged 15 and 16, from Petersfield, have been released on police bail until March.

A spokesman said a full investigation would be undertaken by accident investigation officers in consultation with the Crown Prosecution Service.

The dead man was yesterday named as Peter Mitchell, 41, a father of two from Bedfordham. It was later revealed that his brother-in-law only learnt while he was comforting his bereaved sister that his fiancée had also died in the crash.

Kevin Vickers, 24, and Ann Williamson, 30, lived in Southsea. Miss Williamson's colleague, Doris Hale, 41, from Portsmouth, also died in the collision which took place on the A3(M).



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Violent women attack on quiet

By HANNAH BETTS

THE popular stereotype of the battered husband as a hen-pecked weakling takes a knock in a survey today.

Women attack men where and when they are most vulnerable: one third of victims featured in the survey were attacked in their sleep and a quarter kicked in the testicles. One case involved a woman pouring bleach over her sleeping boyfriend's genitals.

The survey shows that angry women can be just as violent as men. Forty per cent used some kind of weapon to compensate for their relative lack of strength: knives were the instrument of choice, but hammers, bottles and slippers also featured. Seventy

six per cent of the male victims were bigger and stronger than the women who abused them. This may also account for the fact that 39 per cent of male victims felt that the police did not take their complaints seriously: only 7 per cent of women abusers were arrested.

The survey was conducted for the Channel 4 documentary series *Dispatches* and the results will be screened tomorrow. It was analysed for the programme by Professor Kevin Browne, of Birmingham University, a consultant to the Home Office on family violence. He said that it "certainly contains some surprises for those who study domestic violence."

Mints get pets out of a hole

By SHIRLEY ENGLISH

FOR a petshop manager flooded out in the storms that battered Scotland this week, one well-known circular sweet will always be known as "the mint with the vole".

Stuart Sommerville used plastic Super Polo Mint containers as makeshift lifejackets for hamsters and guinea-pigs trapped in his shop in the Ayrshire coast town of Largs.

Mr Sommerville, 31, who runs Beaks 'n' Squawks, feared for the lives of his smaller pets as the water rose to his waist and threatened to swamp the cages during 80mph gales that battered Scotland on Monday. Unable to open the petshop door because of the force of the water

outside, he and his menagerie of rabbits, birds, fish, hamsters and guinea pigs were trapped for three hours.

After lifting some of the cages to higher shelves and realising he could not hold up all the pets at once, Mr Sommerville spotted a can of foam and about five packets of Super Polos. In a flash of inspiration he seized on the idea of filling the plastic containers with foam and tying them to the little creatures with string to increase their buoyancy if the worst came to the worst.

Mr Sommerville and his charges were eventually rescued and yesterday they were safe in the bedroom of his home after attention with a hairdryer.

I'll do it my way, says new man at Dome

LORD Falconer of Thoroton yesterday promised to "crack the whip" to get the Millennium Dome ready in time as he visited the site in Greenwich for the first time.

In the first day of his new job as Dome Minister, the peer praised the "immense" work of his predecessor, Peter Mandelson, but insisted that he would do things his way.

He spent the day in a series of briefings, being brought up to date on the progress of the Dome and the work needed to complete the £758 million project on time.

After touring the site, Lord Falconer said it was "very, very impressive", and brushed aside Tory accusations that he had been appointed as a result of his close friendship with Tony Blair. "It's for others to judge what my qualities are," he said. "The Prime Minister

Lord Falconer admits Jubilee Line may not be completed in time, reports James Landale

thought I was the right man for the job, but only time will tell if he was right."

He added: "I don't think anyone can fill Peter Mandelson's boots. I could never emulate Peter in respect of the work he did for the Dome. I shall just have to do things in my own way."

Asked if he would be the "ringmaster" that the Dome needed, he said: "I don't think

it's going to be necessary to crack the whip. But if it is necessary, crack the whip I will."

Although Mr Mandelson was almost obsessive in his support for the Dome and over the last 18 months did much of the work necessary to get the project up and running, Lord Falconer still faces a substantial in-tray.

As the Government shareholder in the New Millennium Experience Company — which runs the day to day work — he will not take operational decisions. But he is responsible for ensuring that the project is completed on time and fulfils all the Government's aims. He will also have to be the public face of the Dome in Government.

Top of his work list is the need to find more private sponsorship. The company has so far secured pledges for



Lord Falconer at the Dome site yesterday: "I don't think anyone can fill Peter Mandelson's boots. I shall just have to do things in my own way"

£120 million, £30 million short of its target.

As important are the worries about London Underground's new Jubilee Line, which will link the Dome to the centre of the capital. Many fear it will not be ready in time, yet more than 40 per cent of the 12 million expected visitors are forecast to use the line to reach the site. Although the line is the responsibility of the

Transport Department, Lord Falconer will spend much time urging his colleagues to make sure that it is completed in time. "We believe it will be, but I don't think there's anybody in the world who can completely guarantee it."

The peer will also have to ensure that the 14 themed "zones" within the Dome are completed on time and fit with the Government's criteria.

Ministers stipulated that they should be educational, inspiring, and that they involve the whole country.

A fourth job for Lord Falconer is what to do with the Dome after the millennium celebrations. Several companies have expressed an interest in turning the Dome into a convention centre, a regional sports centre or a massive leisure complex. Four consortia

— including a Hollywood film studio — were yesterday understood to have recently proposed turning the site into a film and television production complex. Lord Falconer and Cabinet Office officials will not consider formal bids until later this month.

Lord Falconer will also have to start preparations for the massive New Year's Eve party at the Dome, which is expected

to attract at least 10,000 people. Until 18 months ago, Charlie Falconer was an anonymous barrister who just happened to be a school friend of the Prime Minister. Ennobled and thrust into the Government, he has been equally unknown as Solicitor General, then as Cabinet Office Minister.

Yesterday he took his first steps towards becoming a public figure.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Babysitter on murder charge

A 12-year-old girl has appeared before a youth court in Manchester charged with the murder of a 16-month-old toddler. The girl, who cannot be named, is accused of fatally injuring Molly Adams at the child's home in Crumpsall, Manchester, while babysitting last month. The toddler died in hospital from a fractured skull and brain injuries, but the girl denies that she deliberately harmed her. She was remanded on bail until February 16.

Hoddle divorced

The 19-year marriage of Glenn Hoddle and his wife, Anne, ended yesterday after a court was told that he admitted adultery. The divorce was granted to Mrs Hoddle on the ground that their marriage had irretrievably broken down.

Water firm fined

Anglian Water Services was fined £10,000 for supplying unfit water to Halstead in Essex in December 1977 after a burst main and a drop in a reservoir level. One woman found black water coming from her cold tap.

Gem of a man

Police have praised the honesty of Dave Gilbert, a railway worker who handed in £4,000 worth of stolen jewellery that he found in a bag on the platform of the Maidstone West station in Kent. The haul has been returned to its owners.

Burglary shock

A man returned home the day after his wife's death to find that burglars had broken in and stolen her wedding and engagement rings from a cupboard. George Saul, 80, of Bradford, had been married to Elsie, 79, for 58 years.

Coin identified

An Anglo-Saxon gold coin found near Gloucester has been identified as a thrymsa. It differs from five similar coins discovered at Crondall, Kent, in 1828 because the letters around the edge are thought to spell out the word Wunecton.

Runaway couple spotted on train

By RUSSELL JENKINS

THE police hunt for the runaway couple who vanished with their two foster children moved to the tourist areas of North Yorkshire yesterday after they were seen on a scenic steam railway.

Jeffrey Bramley, 34, and his wife, Jennifer, 35, were noticed by a volunteer ticket collector sitting in a railway carriage with the girls. The collector, the Rev Jack Cooper, said that the older girl, five-year-old Jade Bennett, had been screaming and her sister, Hannah, three, appeared restless. Detectives have been searching for the missing "family" since they disappeared from their home in Ramsey, Cambridgeshire, four months ago after the couple's application to become permanent adoptive parents had been turned down.

Mr Cooper, 54, telephoned police on Monday to tell them that he had seen saw a family answering the Bramleys' description on the 1.50pm train from Grosmont, near Whitby, on Saturday. The four travelled through the Esk Valley and across the North York Moors before getting off the train at Pickering, about 15 miles from York, about 3pm.

Mr Cooper said that the children's uniforms had annoyed other train passengers. "The couple seemed inadequate. She was just sitting there watching and he was trying to get them to be quiet but did not seem able to be making much of a job of it. The children looked all right," he said. "The only reason I noticed them was because, quite bluntly, the children were a damned nuisance."

Mr Cooper told the girls a story about how noisy children frightened sheep. This seemed to calm them down but neither of the adults appeared happy about the intrusion.

Detective Sergeant Mark Nicholson, who is leading the search, said that the couple had most likely been living in bed-and-breakfast hotels in the York area, but that police feared they may become desperate as their money began to run out.

Passenger tried to open jet door

By ARTHUR LEATHLEY, AVIATION CORRESPONDENT

A DRUNKEN passenger on a transatlantic jet tried to open an exit door at 30,000 feet as cabin crew and other passengers struggled to restrain him.

Witnesses said the man, a 31-year-old Scot, went "berserk", lashing out and injuring a crew member and three passengers. The incident, on board a Continental Airlines flight to Gatwick, was described by police there as one of the worst cases of air rage they had dealt with.

The aircraft's second officer was called from the flight deck to try to subdue the man, who broke free and tried to open the rear door. Although locking systems and pressurised cabins should make it impos-

sible to open an exit door in flight, any threat to do so can be deemed an offence.

Action intended to endanger life is among the most serious offences under aviation law. It carries a maximum sentence of two years' imprisonment and a £5,000 fine.

Police at Gatwick were alerted as the aircraft, flying from Newark, New Jersey, approached the airport on Monday night. By the time it had landed staff had managed to subdue the man and secure him to his seat using handcuffs, which are carried by most airlines on long-haul flights.

A man was released on bail by Sussex police last night.

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Doctors cleared of killing cancer boy

Mother attacks decision to drop case, write Tim Jones and Alex O'Connell

TWO senior doctors were cleared yesterday of the manslaughter of a 12-year-old cancer victim as an Old Bailey judge condemned Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children for a "chapter of accidents and misunderstandings".

Richie William, who had been given a 75 per cent chance of surviving chemotherapy, died in agony five days after a drug was injected into his spine instead of a vein.

Charges against John Lee, 34, a specialist registrar in paediatric anaesthetics, and Dermot Murphy, 34, a registrar in haematology, were withdrawn after an important prosecution witness changed his mind over their degree of culpability.

After the decision, the boy's mother, Dolores William, 37, who is pursuing a civil claim for damages, said: "Instead of helping him to recover from his illness, Richie was injected with a drug that killed him. We expect hospitals to help to cure our children, not give them treatment that kills."

Mrs William, of Catford, southeast London, who has two older daughters, added: "We are still devastated by the way Richie died. He suffered a great deal of pain in the days before his death because of the negligent treatment he received. The doctors never personally apologised to me, Richard's dad or his sister. It would go a long way."

The Crown Prosecution Service had relied on the evidence of a prosecution witness, Alan Aitkenhead, in its decision to press charges against the two men. At first, Professor Aitken-



Dolores and Richie William, who died aged 12

head stated that Dr Lee's conduct over the injection had fallen "seriously and significantly below that which could be demanded of him".

Later Professor Aitkenhead, Professor of Anaesthetics at Nottingham University, decided that significant failures in the system operated by the hospital at the time had greater responsibility than he had first thought.

As a result, the CPS was advised to drop the prosecution, because it was unlikely to secure a conviction. Yesterday the two men were found not guilty by the Recorder of London, Judge Michael Hyam.

Richard Horwell, for the prosecution, said that, at the time of the incident, in July 1997, Richie was in his 14th week of intensive treatment and was about to have his last course of chemotherapy. Mr Horwell told the court that there had been a number of failures that had led to the boy's death. Before the fatal injection, the boy had eaten a bis-

chotomy into the spine. Mr Horwell said one of the two drugs used, Vincristine, could be taken only intravenously and, if injected into the spine, invariably proved fatal.

At Great Ormond Street, Richie, instead of being admitted to the Lion Ward, which specialised in such treatment, was taken to the more general Nuffield Ward. From there, a nurse wrongly sent Vincristine to the operating theatre in spite of a rule that stated it should never be allowed in.

Mr Horwell said: "If it had not been sent to the theatre, Richie would not have died."

Robert Greighton, the hospital's chief executive, said the two doctors had been suspended and would now be subject to an inquiry. Its conclusions would be sent to the General Medical Council, which would review their position.

A spokesman for Great Ormond Street said it had taken steps to improve communication and clinical procedures.



Dr Lee, left, and Dr Murphy, from Great Ormond Street, were cleared of manslaughter at the Old Bailey yesterday

Runaway couple spotted on train

Pair must wait to know fate

By IAN MURRAY, MEDICAL CORRESPONDENT

THE two Great Ormond Street doctors will continue to be suspended from duty until the case has been studied by an NHS tribunal. Only if they are cleared by the tribunal will they be able to resume their specialised jobs.

If they are found guilty by the tribunal, the case may be referred to the General Medical Council to decide whether they should be struck off the medical register, but that is unlikely to happen now they have been cleared by the courts.

Peter Tomlin, secretary of the Society of Clinical Psychiatrists, which champions the cause of suspended doctors, said that the continuing suspension was another example of the "unfair double jeopardy"

faced by members of the profession. He has a report out tomorrow looking at the cases of 201 practitioners suspended over the past 10 years. It shows that the average cost of successfully prosecuting one doctor is £2.5 million.

"Only one doctor in six of those who are suspended is ever found to have been in the wrong, yet someone who is suspended without justification can have a career ruined after spending years waiting for the NHS to make up its mind," he said.

"An innocent person loses his income, has a reputation smeared and yet has no recompense. The longer the case, the worse the injustice, and some cases can drag on for years without a result."

Scientists discover cancer protector

By IAN MURRAY, MEDICAL CORRESPONDENT

A WAY of making cancer cells commit suicide has been developed by scientists who believe the discovery could lead to a new generation of drugs to tackle the disease.

A team from Brunel University in West London has found a way of neutralising the enzyme that protects cancer cells from the natural ageing process that destroys normal cells.

Robert Newbold, who led the research, said: "An international race to find this natural inhibitor has been running for many years and this latest discovery has really put British scientists a step ahead."

Normally, old or damaged cells stop dividing and self-destruct in order to prevent any mutations being duplicated and growing into tumours. However, cancer cells contain an enzyme called "telomerase" which overrides this natural process, so they ignore the self-destruct messages and continue to multiply indefinitely.

Reporting the findings in today's issue of the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*, Professor Newbold says they have now discovered a way of switching off the enzyme so that the normal process takes over. The next stage will be to find ways to mimic the group of genes that effectively control the natural ageing process of cells. It is hoped this will lead to the synthetic production of drugs to block telomerase and halt the growth of tumours.

Warning after more meningitis deaths

By A CORRESPONDENT

HEALTH experts warned the public to be vigilant for the symptoms of meningitis after two more deaths from the disease were confirmed yesterday.

At least nine deaths from meningitis have been reported over Christmas and the new year, with most of the victims children or teenagers.

The Meningitis Trust said: "Sadly, the reports we are seeing are pretty typical. December or early January are the peak times for meningitis cases. You might see an increase from the average 38 cases a week to around 70 cases."

Meningitis can be passed from one person to another by sneezing, coughing or kissing. The trust spokeswoman said the increase in colds over the winter months made people especially vulnerable. "It's important people are vigilant at this time of year. They need to be alert for the signs of meningitis and contact a doctor as soon as symptoms appear."

It was confirmed yesterday that a five-month-old boy from Dinas Powys, near Cardiff, had died in Cardiff's University Hospital from the serious meningococcal strain. A 42-year-old woman, from Taff's Well, near Cardiff, died in East Glamorgan Hospital.

Symptoms of meningitis include severe headache, vomiting, joint and muscle pains and an aversion to bright light. A rash that does not disperse under pressure indicates meningococcal septicaemia, the most dangerous form.

Cut out and stick on your office door

Dear Colleagues,

This Thursday I will be leaving the office at 8.00pm at the latest.

Not 8.30pm, not 8.15pm, not even 8.01pm, but 8.00pm.

This gives me a whole hour in which to get home and secure a good seat for the new series of Friends and ER.

I regret any inconvenience this may cause but unfortunately it's unavoidable.

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For maximum effect:

1. Place on photocopier, and enlarge by 141%.
2. Tape the two sections together.

The Thatcher theory of women's success

Study shows female managers go to great lengths to appear more macho than men, writes Alexandra Frean

WOMEN who succeed as managers do not do so because of their feminine characteristics, such as sensitivity and warmth. According to new research, they do well because they adopt an aggressive, macho personality.

A four-year study of the psychological make-up of more than 1,200 managers has found that the basic differences between the sexes in the general population are largely non-existent among managers. The survey contradicts claims this week by the style writer Peter York, who said his own studies had found that women managers displaying motherly qualities were more successful.

Tuvia Melamed, an occupational psychologist and senior consultant for the recruitment consultancy Capita Ras, who conducted the research, said that women managers not only had to behave like their male colleagues to succeed, but also frequently had to be tougher and meaner.

"Gender matters very little," he said. "What characterises managers most is that they are tough-minded, macho and socially bold. Many of the women we studied said they felt they had to be more like a man than men. Forget about the caring, sharing Nineties and politi-

cal correctness. That just does not work — toughness does." The findings, presented at a British Psychological Society conference in Blackpool yesterday, fly in the face of current management theory, which holds that women should be given a fast track to promotion because the supposedly inherent female abilities to communicate well, work as a team, nurture relationships and to care and share can enhance business performance.

Although the number of women managers has risen dramatically — from 2 per cent in 1973 to 18 per cent in 1998 — some larger companies have launched affirmative action programmes to speed up

NET LINKS

<http://www.capitagroup.com> Capita Ras site
<http://www.bps.org.uk/opportunity2000/index.htm> Opportunity 2000 site
<http://www.bps.org.uk/TheBritishPsychologicalSociety>

the pace of change. BT has appointed a "gender champion" to promote equal opportunities within the company. Shell has pledged to increase the number of senior women managers from 4 per cent to 20 per cent over five years.

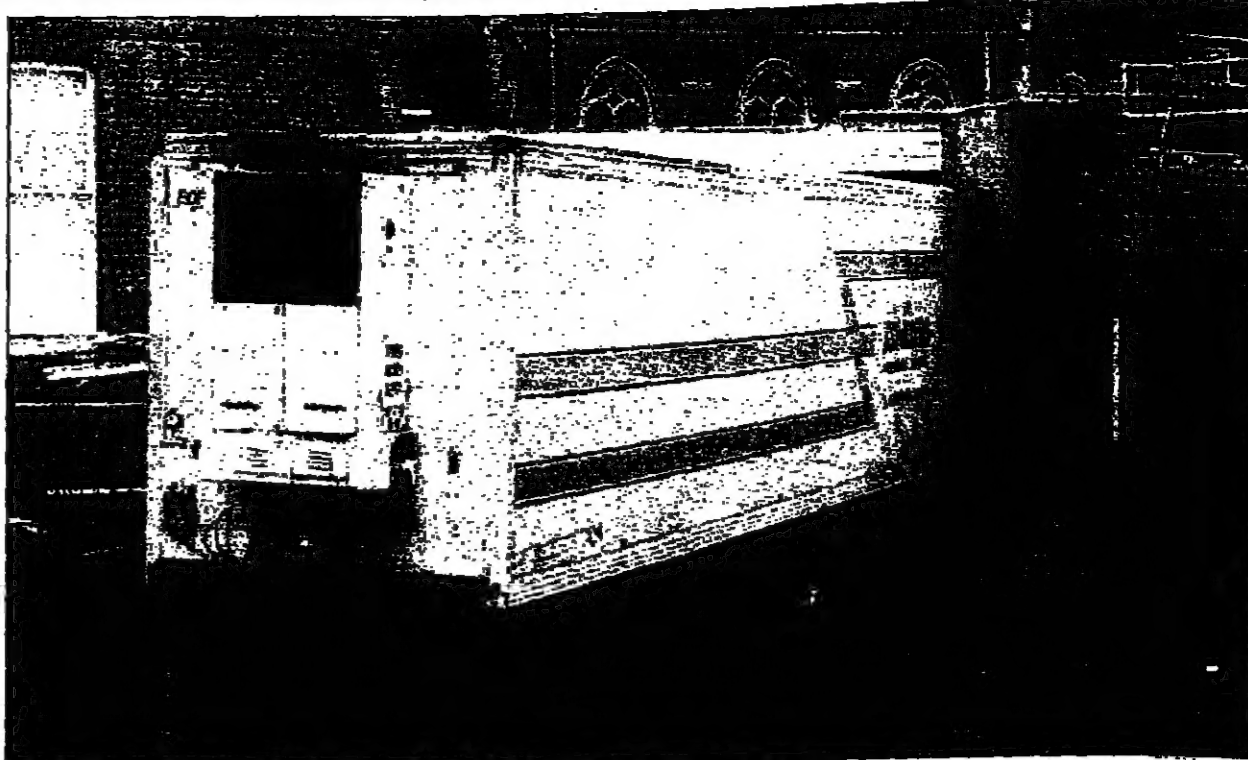
The practical implications of Dr Melamed's research are far-reaching and raise serious questions about the relevance of setting such quotas for numbers of female managers.

The survey is based on inter-

views with 294 female and 949 male managers, whose personalities were then analysed and compared with gender norms for the general population. The interviews took place between 1993 and 1997.

Dr Melamed found that, while many women managers had a "built-in tendency" to behave like men — what he described as "the Margaret Thatcher phenomenon" — many had to work very hard at putting on their macho act. This could make it difficult for companies to retain female executives for any length of time. "A lot of women said they had difficulties with having to act tough and there was a higher level of stress among women managers than men," Dr Melamed said. "A lot of women said that it frequently made them question what they were doing with their lives and wonder if they should be doing something else."

Equal opportunities campaigners described Dr Melamed's research as unhelpful. Ann Chant, director of Opportunity 2000, the national campaign started in 1991 to increase the quality and quantity of women's participation in the workforce, said: "Our campaign research and our own member companies' experience shows that it is absolutely not the case that women have to behave like men to succeed. Women and men have very different styles, each of which can be very valuable. Surely a mix of styles is the most valuable."



The refrigerated lorry being used as a temporary mortuary by the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital

Dobson fears NHS could not cope with flu epidemic

Warning as hospital hires mobile mortuary, reports Ian Murray

FRANK DOBSON, the Health Secretary, admitted yesterday that the National Health Service would find it difficult to cope with a flu epidemic.

He spoke as one hospital admitted that the current outbreak had forced it to hire a refrigerated lorry to store the dead because the 80 body refrigerators in its mortuary were full.

However, while hospitals in all areas but the South and West were reporting serious winter pressures and cancelling all but urgent operations, the outbreak is still far from reaching epidemic proportions. New figures due out, possibly today, are expected to show an increase in numbers of flu victims, but they will still be well below the official epidemic level of 400 cases per 100,000 people seen by doctors in a week.

Mr Dobson admitted that the NHS was under severe pressure. Staff were at full stretch, doing an excellent job of handling high numbers of cases, he said, but, if there were an epidemic, "it would be very difficult to cope".

A diesel-powered mobile cold store has been fitted out for the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital with racks for 36 bodies. It is expected to be used for at least another two weeks to cope with an unusually high number of deaths, particularly among frail, elderly people, who are especially susceptible to flu. The hospital, which has

cancelled all non-emergency operations to make the maximum number of beds available for flu patients, has been warned that eight out of ten families in the Norfolk area are likely to develop flu, cold or cough symptoms this winter.

The holiday period has made the situation worse because fewer funerals have taken place. Peter Moffat, spokesman for the hospital, said: "The rise in the number of deaths coincided with fewer funeral directors arriving at the hospital to collect bodies for burial and cremation. We ran out of capacity in our mortuary so we had to bring in a temporary mobile refrigerated unit to help with cold storage."

Malcolm Stamp, chief executive of the hospital trust, said: "The public can be assured that the deceased are treated with the utmost respect by our staff, who are working under extreme pressure. The hospital has a purpose-built room for relatives and friends to view

bodies and all families will receive the same level of advice."

As the number of cases begins to rise, many other hospitals have taken the precaution of cancelling all but emergency operations. Among those doing so is New Cross Hospital in Wolverhampton, where many staff have been working double shifts throughout the holiday, and all hospitals in the Sandwell Health Authority area in the West Midlands. Walsall Manor Hospital had 278 emergency admissions over four days, 100 more than on the same week a year ago.

However, in the North West of England, things are improving. A spokesman for the regional health authority said: "It is still extremely busy, with a lot of sickness about, but the severe pressure of last week does appear to be easing."

Mr Dobson yesterday gave details of the 2,200 schemes for handling winter pressures that will be funded by the £159 million announced in November. Many focus on helping the frail and elderly and include funding for community nurses and emergency response teams.

Blood stocks at record low

BY IAN MURRAY
MEDICAL CORRESPONDENT

STOCKS of blood held by the National Blood Authority are at a dangerously low level, with supplies of O group — the most common — lower than at any time since the creation of the authority in 1993.

For the first time the authority has taken television advertising in an attempt to attract the donors it needs to provide

the 10,000 units of blood that are needed every day. At present it holds only 14,832 units — less than 1½ days' supply — and demand is outstripping supply. Reserves fell by 2,500 units in the 24 hours up to yesterday morning.

The shortage of O-group supplies is particularly worrying. Although 46 per cent of the population needs this group, there are only 3,098 units in the available stocks.

Supplies of O-group negative, which 7 per cent of the population are, are down to 797 units.

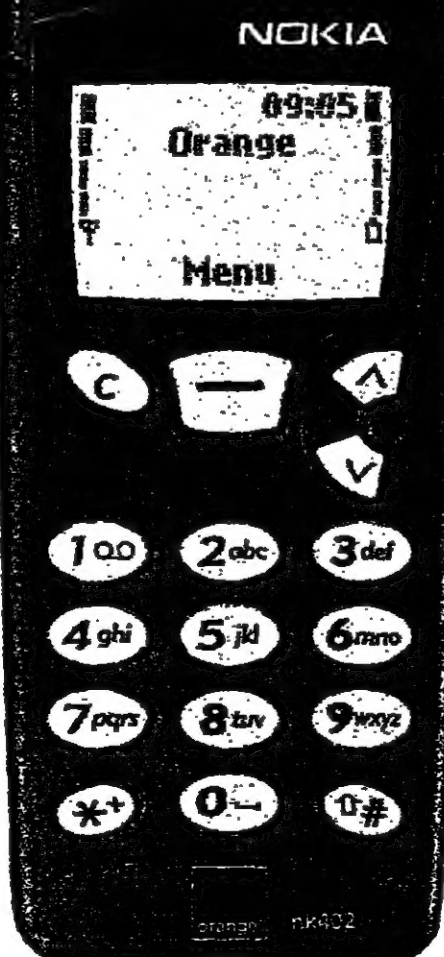
The £1 million television advertising campaign comes as the latest figures show that less than 6 per cent of the eligible population (3.5 million people) gives blood. Supplies of blood keep for up to a month, and most hospitals have a small stock. But unless new donors are found quickly, operations will have to be cancelled.

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Villagers save their green from bulldozers

Helen Johnstone on campaign that raised £350,000 in just over a year

VILLAGERS have saved a medieval green from development after their campaign, backed by the Prince of Wales, raised the £350,000 needed to buy it in just over a year.

Residents in Kingsland, Herefordshire, which has a population of 1,000 and dates from the 7th century, were incensed at plans for 13 houses and parking for 34 cars, obstructing views of the adjoining 12th-century castle and 13th-century church.

They sold everything from marmalade to manure to raise the £350,000, which they reached with the aid of a bank loan of £94,000 and interest-free loans totalling £120,000. The remainder was raised through events organised by the Kingsland Millennium Green Trust. The Prince donated a set of table mats, which raised £125 at one auction, and the Bishop of Hereford, the Right Rev John Oliver, offered lunch at the House of Lords.

Workmen had already begun excavating 600 tonnes of soil

from the 1½-acre site when a group of local businessmen approached the Birmingham-based developers, Beches Two, with a plan to buy it back for the village. They were given a week to gauge local opinion, which resulted in 98 per cent of residents supporting their plan.

Within 24 hours Patricia Pethercray, 51, organised a public meeting, at which it was agreed to ask the developer to allow a month for a proposal to be put together. She said yesterday: "I'd heard about the plans to put up a housing estate a few weeks earlier, and I was incensed. I thought that the best way to save the green would be to buy it, but I had no idea how to do it until a local dignitary told me about the Countryside Commission Millennium Fund."

The Countryside Commission backed the project with a grant of £55,000 from the Millennium Green Fund; other donations from environmental trusts totalled £42,000. Jim Langridge, of the Midlands



Katie Eastaugh, left, with other members of the Kingsland Millennium Green Trust, which raised £350,000 to buy the village green from developers

branch of the Countryside Commission, said yesterday: "We had more than 100 applications for grants from the Millennium Green Fund, but we found that this bid was one of the more businesslike and organised. Plus, we couldn't help but be impressed by the villagers' enthusiasm and energy. Normally it takes two to three

months to put a bid together, but these ladies did it in a couple of weeks."

Mrs Pethercray, chairman of the trust and an education consultant who has lived in the village for 16 years, said people had been prepared to sit in front of the bulldozers to save the green, one of few remaining green sites within the

village. "By October we'd held about 40 fundraising events which raised £12,000, and after seven months we had raised £212,000."

"Prince Charles donated a set of table mats depicting some of his paintings, and a friend at the BBC took four people on a tour of the studios for £320. We're probably the

last bastion of old-fashioned rural life in Herefordshire and we want it to stay that way."

She added that villagers had to continue fundraising to repay the money owed.

Katie Eastaugh, 31, a trustee, said yesterday: "The green appeared as an orchard on maps going back to the 16th century. We've been told by local histo-

rians that the green must have been there since the village was founded."

Stuart Harper, managing director of Beches Two, said: "I doubted they would succeed in raising that kind of money."

He added: "I take my hat off to them. We've lost a site, but we made an acceptable return."

Viewers like new look of TV news

By CAROL MIDDLEY
MEDIA CORRESPONDENT

REVAMPED versions of the heavyweight television news programmes, *Newsnight* and *Channel 4 News*, attracted nearly half a million more viewers this week.

BBC's *Newsnight*, which has been redesigned to give a more viewer-friendly look, improved its ratings from an average 1.1 million to 1.4 million when it unveiled its new image on Monday night. On the same night, *Channel 4 News*, whose set has undergone a facelift that includes purple sofas and orange desks, attracted 900,000 viewers compared with its usual 800,000.

The BBC and ITV both claimed victory in the ratings for news programmes during 1998. Broadcasters' Audience Research Board figures show that the BBC's *Six O'Clock News* was the most popular programme, with an average of 5.8 million viewers. ITN's early evening news programme attracted 4.3 million.

However, ITN's *News at Ten*, to be axed in the next few weeks, proved to be the most popular nightly news programme with an average audience of 5.7 million. This compared with 5.2 million for the *Nine O'Clock News*.

Vanessa Feltz, who left ITV for the BBC after being refused a salary of £2.5 million, attracted under a million viewers when *The Vanessa Show* was launched on Monday.

Big Brother cleans up 'high-rise slums'

HIGH-TECH surveillance equipment has helped to rejuvenate some of Britain's worst council tower blocks and may have earned a reprieve for others facing demolition.

Brian McGrail, of the Open University, told the Royal Geographical Society - Institute of British Geographers conference in Leicester yesterday that closed-circuit television cameras had had a remarkable effect on estates in Edinburgh and Glasgow that were once seen as high-rise slums made uninhabitable by criminal tenants. On one Edinburgh estate, Gracemount, which has three high-rise blocks, about 40 per cent of tenants left within a year of the cameras being installed because they were using the flats as a base for crime or benefit fraud.

However, the flats were quickly relet to more law-abiding tenants, including hard-to-let ground-floor flats, which had been boarded up.

"These blocks were the worst I had seen," said Dr McGrail, who carried out the research as part of an Economic and Social Science Research

NIGEL HAWKES at the geographers' conference

Council programme measuring the effects of information technology on society.

"There were graffiti, broken glass and rubbish everywhere. The lifts had been neglected, and the area around the blocks was ugly. When I was last there, in August, everything had changed. Aesthetically it looked a lot better, as the ground floors were let. Previously nobody would live in them. The blocks had been painted, money spent on maintenance, and the tenants were happier."

The technology that makes such changes possible include closed-circuit television cameras, which feed pictures to a concierge, who can also monitor the comings and goings of the tenants by records made every time they use their keys; and a direct link from every flat to the concierge by fibre-optic cable so that tenants can make

immediate contact if problems arise.

The monitoring of movement soon makes it clear if any tenants are not actually living in their flats, but merely using them as "Giro drops", postal addresses for Giro cheques to which they are not entitled. It can also indicate whether a tenant is ill and has not left the block for several days.

"The majority of tenants are in favour of the changes," Dr McGrail said. "Those who aren't have left. Those who live there now say they feel more secure, are more willing to chat to neighbours or get into lifts with strangers."

Most of Britain's tower blocks were built between 1955 and 1974, but disenchantment with them set in in the 1980s. With many planners feeling that the social problems that plagued many of them were incurable, demolition seemed the only option. Some have been knocked down, but the cost of demolition - about £500,000 per block - is often prohibitive.

"Housing departments are reluctant to spend that sort of money when it could be used for the direct benefit of other tenants," Dr McGrail said. Tower blocks are also expensive to run, costing more than they produce in rents, so selling them to private developers is seldom an option.

Dr McGrail believes that the benefits of surveillance technology are such that many tower blocks could now be kept in use for another 30 years or so. While never likely to be the Utopia that some architects envisaged, he said, they did have a future.



Cameras cut crime on Edinburgh's Gracemount estate

Pitfalls of flexible hours

FLEXIBLE working patterns, which the Government sees as the key to preserving family life, result in people seeing less of their families than before, the conference was told.

Diane Perrons, of the London School of Economics, studied patterns of work in supermarkets for the European Commission and found that, while flexible working gave many advantages to employers, reducing overtime payments and National Insurance costs, the benefits to those employed were less apparent.

On the positive side, it gave women an opportunity to get into the labour force, with working hours that enabled them to look after their children. The drawback was that parents never had any time to spend together. "One comes home and the other goes off," Dr Perrons said.

Ice Age may be 50,000 years late

MANMADE global warming may postpone the arrival of the next Ice Age, the conference was told. Instead of ice spreading down across Scotland and the North of England within the next 55,000 years, the deep freeze may be delayed for a further 50,000 years or more, Paul Burgess, of the University of East Anglia, said.

The ice will certainly come, however, as a result of changes in the Earth's orbit, tilt and precession - the process by which the seasons shift slowly over time.

Using a computer model developed at the University of Louvain in Belgium, Mr Burgess and his colleagues Jean Palutikof and Clare Goodess combined these long-term cycles with the burning of fossil fuels, which produces the carbon dioxide that contributes to global warming.

Mr Burgess said that, using carbon dioxide levels found in ice cores, the model correctly identified the extent of the last

glacial maximum, when ice spread over Scotland and much of northern England and Wales.

Given natural levels of carbon dioxide, the model predicts a similar ice coverage in 55,000 to 60,000 years. Factoring in manmade global warming at moderate levels delays the growth of ice, but when growth starts it is much swifter and a complete glaciation is achieved on the same time-scale.

Only if extreme global warming is assumed is there any delay in glaciation, but it will still occur about 110,000 years from now.



<http://www.geog.le.ac.uk>
Conference programme on the Leicester University Geography Department website
<http://www.rgs.org> The Royal Geographical Society - Institute of British Geographers site



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THE TIMES WEDNESDAY JANUARY 6 1999

HOME NEWS 9

Euthanasia claims sow doubt in families' minds

Michael Horsnell and Peter Foster on fears aroused by a police inquiry into the deaths of geriatric patients

FOR 10 years, Queenie Smith watched her husband slowly losing his mind. At the end of his long descent into senility, she took comfort from the knowledge that she had done everything she could for him.

She visited Ernest in a psychiatric ward at Kingsway Hospital, Derby, three times a week. On the day he died she was at her 92-year-old husband's bedside, holding his hand as he stared vacantly into space.

But whatever peace of mind she drew from her unwavering devotion was destroyed last year when sinister allegations about the Rowsley psychiatric ward appeared in the local press. Nurses at the hospital had claimed that patients on the ward were being allowed to die slowly from hunger and dehydration. Senior colleagues, they alleged, were withdrawing food and water from patients without proper authorisation, leaving them fatally weakened and vulnerable to secondary conditions such as pneumonia.

The implication, according to one source, was that some staff on Rowsley ward were hastening patients to their deaths by placing them on "nil-by-mouth" regimes, claiming that they were at risk of choking. One source at the hospital had claimed that the re-

gime amounted to euthanasia.

The police took the allegations seriously and launched a full investigation in November 1997. For more than a year, a team of eight or nine detectives, some with experience in murder investigations, have been examining medical records and interviewing nurses, doctors and dietitians.

The death certificates of more than 40 patients who died at Kingsway Hospital between October 1993 and summer 1997 have been examined by police, and three nurses have been suspended pending the outcome of the investigation.

DERBY

tion, which is expected to be completed by spring.

Although all 600 staff at the hospital have been told not to speak about the investigation, it has emerged that four months before the police inquiry began, the Southern Derbyshire Mental Health Trust had already begun an internal investigation into nursing practices on the ward. The inquiry produced a lengthy "action plan", obtained by The Times, which details strict procedures for dealing with pa-

tients suspected to be at risk of choking. According to a source close to the investigation, several nurses believed that patients were being placed on nil-by-mouth regimes too often and too early, and some resorted to smuggling in food to help ailing patients.

It is clear from the report that relations among staff broke down as disagreement over the nil-by-mouth practice spread. The introduction to the report concludes: "We hope that trusting relationships can be re-established, but we realise that this will take time." Some staff were not reassured and, according to another source, went to police with a list of 15 names.

A source who was among those pressing for a full police investigation said: "You would see patients who came in looking in good shape, but they would have one momentary choking fit and suddenly they were bedridden and going downhill fast. They were given nil by mouth and no drips. It was a painful death, being left to dehydrate slowly."

For 79-year-old Mrs Smith, and several other widows whose husbands were on

Rowsley ward, the allegations are almost impossible to believe. All say they found the staff on the ward unfailingly attentive. Whenever she arrived on visits, Mrs Smith recalled, her husband was clean-shaven and immaculately dressed in shirt and tie. The ward itself was refurbished in the early 1990s and had a sitting room, dining area and well-appointed dormitory.

The allegations have, however, left lurking doubts in the minds of some relatives. Nancy Jowett, 81, whose husband, Sidney, a former chief of the Derbyshire Fire Service, died on the ward in February last year, has always supported the staff, but admitted: "When you are not in the [medical] profession you accept what is going on in the wards. We have been living with this for a year. It's terrible. It puts doubts into your mind."

For now, the relatives of those who died on Rowsley ward can only wait for the results of the police investigation. Having placed their trust in the nursing staff, most have only good stories to tell. But after watching their husbands, fathers or brothers suffer such lingering deaths, the possibility that their trust was cruelly abused is too much to bear.



Ernest and Queenie Smith in 1987. She visited him in Kingsway three times a week

Leading article, page 17

While there is life there is hope, insist grieving relatives

Mary Dalley, 83, was a kindly, outgoing woman who had brought up two children and was much cherished by her grandchildren. She was admitted to Queen Mary's Hospital in Sidcup, southeast London, in severe pain from a duodenal ulcer caused by duodenitis and by aspirin for angina, which she was later found not to have. She died a month later from what her daughter alleges, in a complaint before the General Medical Council, was deliberately induced dehydration after a misdiagnosis of brain damage. Mrs Dalley haemorrhaged so severely

KENT



from the ulcer while left untreated on a commode for 50 minutes, five days after her admission, that she went into shock and scarcely spoke for a week. Doctors diagnosed brain damage, despite the protests of her daughter, Pat Prange, and the evidence that she had begun to talk in sentences again. Five doctors have been named in the complaint by Mrs Prange, 55. Jackie Andrews, communications manager for Queen Mary's Sidcup Trust, said: "There was a complaint received which was fully dealt with at the time and we went through a full complaints procedure."

Robert Byatt, 69, was taken to Eastbourne District General Hospital after a stroke on August 11 last year. Four days later he was sitting up in bed, playing cards, laughing, joking, and complaining of being bored, but he had picked up a bladder infection that, according to his wife, was left untreated. With the outside temperature at 30C (86F), a ward notice stipulated that patients should receive two litres of water a day, and Mr Byatt was put on a drip. On August 18, Brenda Byatt was told that he had had a second stroke. She said: "I found him thrashing around in bed. He had septicaemia and had a grand mal convulsion. Septicaemia had affected his kidneys, heart, lungs and circulation. He was given drugs to calm him." Intravenous fluid was withdrawn on August 22, according to her records, and she estimates that, during his 18-day illness, he received a third of the fluids he should have had. Mr Byatt died on August 28 after a chest infection, and police are now investigating his death.

SUSSEX



Joan Kenny, 71, had a stroke after the death of her husband in 1987. She was a lively woman with a fine sense of humour and, with the help of a walking frame and carers, managed to get about. After living for 14 months at a nursing home near Stockport, she had a major stroke from which she never recovered consciousness. She died six days later, on January 16, 1996. Despite the pleas of her youngest sister, Patricia Wise, she was denied intravenous fluid during those last few days. Two days after the stroke, Mrs Wise asked the matron if her sister could be put on a drip as she was dehydrated. She was told that might be possible, only for the doctor to say it was not. On the fourth day of her illness, according to Mrs Kenny's daughter, Lynda, her mother had tried to speak to her on 14 occasions. Mrs Wise said: "My feeling is that, even if she was terminal, she should have been put on a drip. It's not exactly a complicated procedure... While there is life there is hope." She complained to Stockport Health Authority, but the doctor was found not to be in breach of his terms of service. Mrs Wise lost an appeal to the Health Services Appeal Authority.

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John Bendit: 'Aided suspected terrorist'

Euro-MP 'may face charge'

FROM BEN MACINTYRE IN PARIS

THE former Sixties student leader Daniel Cohn-Bendit, 53, who heads the French Greens' list of candidates for June's European elections, may face a legal investigation for allegedly aiding a fugitive.

Hans Joachim Klein, suspected of helping the terrorist Carlos the Jackal (Ilich Ramirez Sanchez), was arrested in France in August after 20 years on the run and faces extradition to Germany.

Herr Cohn-Bendit, 53, now a German Euro-MP, has admitted providing him with assistance. Prosecutors in Frankfurt plan to apply to have his parliamentary immunity lifted, a necessary precursor to any investigation.

Germans urge 'aloof' Britain to join euro

FROM ROGER BOYES IN BONN

BRITAIN should get off its "high horse" and join the euro, according to the German press, echoing the confidence of the Bonn Government that the Blair Administration will sign up for the single European currency sooner rather than later.

The sentiment was clear in both the tabloid and the broadsheet press, but it was expressed with a curious lip-curling contempt by the mass-circulation *Bild* newspaper which has in the past entertained its own doubts about the euro.

"The British in their fine pin-stripes did not want to get their hands dirty while we were toiling away on the construction of the euro," said the newspaper's main economics commentator. "Our pound is staying out, they said with stiff upper lip."

Now Britain had to make its choice. "The pound is losing ground against the euro, companies cannot plan ahead, their stock looks shaky. Big capital, behaving like a tree full of ravens, is fluttering out of the island and billions are leaving London in the direction of euroland."

The British had climbed

proudly on their high horse, the paper declared, but now they should dismount.

These seemed to be rather strong conclusions to draw on the basis of one day's euro trading. By German, though not of course by British, tabloid standards, this was tough talk. But even the shrewd commentator of *Handelsblatt*, Germany's sober business daily, was calculating that Britain would have to jump much quicker than expected.

"Caught between the two huge blocks of the euro and the dollar, the British economy (which reacts sensitively to exchange rates) could soon lead to a hasty and spontaneous British entry into the European monetary union," the paper said.

The *Stuttgart Zeitung*, usually well informed on finance ministry affairs, said: "London is isolated." Above all, it said: "British industry runs the risk of falling behind in the future race for investment."

even if the new currency proves to be soft and prone to crisis this will not help Britain, because a weak euro would mean a tangible increase in the value of the pound and worse export opportunities for

British businesses ... every day the pressure grows to give up the senseless opposition."

To some degree, these comments reflect the triumphalism of a good start and relief that the beginning of the euro was not a fiasco. But they also revealed the mood of Gerhard Schröder's Government — and above all of Oskar Lafontaine, his Finance Minister — who are convinced that Britain will not be able to resist the pressure of events in continental Europe.

Some nervousness about the future evolution of the European economy could be detected yesterday. Heiner Flassbeck, Herr Lafontaine's right-hand man at the Finance Ministry, said he was satisfied with the smooth start of the euro. But he was far from optimistic about Europe's overall economic prospects.

A strong economic downturn in Europe would, he said, lead to higher unemployment. Domestic consumption had to be encouraged in order to boost the economy, he said, adding that no attempt should be made to increase state expenditure.

Leading article, page 17



Bathers enjoy a walk in the sun yesterday at Biarritz in southwest France, where temperatures topped 70F (20C). Paris recorded a January record of 59F (16C), but farmers were anxious over their crops and ski resort owners were praying for snow

Nuclear waste 'to bankroll Lebed campaign'

FROM ANNA BLUNDY IN MOSCOW

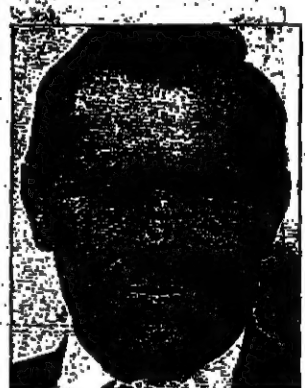
WITH a year to go until Russian presidential elections if Boris Yeltsin sees out his full term, it has been suggested that Aleksandr Lebed, the gruff Governor of Krasnoyarsk, might be attempting to raise money for his campaign by insisting that his Krasnoyarsk gubernatorial Foundation be the mediator through which Ukraine would pay Russia for the disposal of nuclear waste.

Sogodnya, newspaper reports, in an article called *The Temptation of Nuclear Profits*, that \$69 million (£40 million) allocated by the Ukrainian Government for the storage and processing of waste in the Krasnoyarsk area has gone missing. The money, to be precise, probably never existed because Atomenergoprom, the Ukrainian nuclear fuel company, is supposed to pay a mere 15 per cent of the sum due in cash.

Mr Lebed complains that the goods, services and IDs that make up the rest of the payment always arrive late and never in full.

The agreement is that the Zheleznogorsk iron ore processing factory in Krasnoyarsk accepts 250 tonnes of nuclear waste per year at a fee of \$275 per kilo. "By recycling one kilogram of used nuclear fuel, one can earn up to \$1,000," Yevgeny Adamov told deputies of the Krasnoyarsk territorial legislature yesterday, suggesting that there is an urgent need to bring payments into line with the rest of the world.

Mr Lebed has elected to hold Ukraine to ransom on the issue and is refusing to accept any more nuclear waste until the debt is paid at a reasonable rate. He also insists that his foundation must mediate in the affair, according to information obtained by *Sogodnya*. As the waste piles up, experts agree that a concentration of nuclear material can result in "catastrophic incidents".



Lebed: chose to hold Ukraine to ransom

Goggle box drives ape family apart

FROM ANNA BLUNDY IN MOSCOW

A TELEVISION, intended to provide help for an orang-utan couple in St Petersburg Zoo, has turned them into telly addicts, the *Moscow Times* reported yesterday.

Monika and Rabu had failed to be model parents to their male baby, Ramon, so a Samsung executive, himself a new father, gave the set in the hope that educational videos might teach the orang-utans how to care for their offspring.

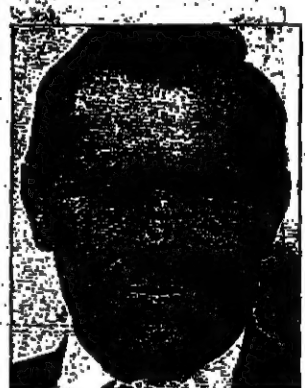
Rabu, the family's patriarch, has become so obsessed with the television which hangs outside his cage that he has started to ignore his mate, who in turn is feeling rejected and miserable. Zoo officials have now curtailed viewing hours, in the hope that Rabu will regain his attentive nature and that Monika will resume her painting career, cast aside in favour of the box.

Aleksandr Karpov, chief psychologist at the Russian Ministry of Health, admitted

that any addiction to a lifeless object "can easily result in a strong separation from reality". He added that anyone who spends a disproportionate amount of time watching television or playing computer games is likely to cut himself off from communication with others, including his own family, and he may become a defective personality with one-sided development.

Rabu arrived in St Petersburg from Antwerp Zoo in 1977 and he and Monika had their offspring on November 20. However, being reared in captivity both parents had lost the nurturing instincts necessary to raise their baby, so he was removed to an incubator where he was fed and looked after by zoo staff.

The zoo plans to appeal to American primate centres for help. It also hopes to bring in human mothers to demonstrate their skills to the hapless orang-utan.



Lebed: chose to hold Ukraine to ransom

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Cook cash for war on rebels in Sierra Leone

London backs Freetown regime with extra £1m to Nigerian-led force, writes Michael Binyon

BRITAIN yesterday announced that it was giving an extra £1 million to support the Nigerian-led forces fighting the rebels in Sierra Leone. The money will pay for lorries, communications and logistical support, but not for arms.

Foreign Office's announcement came as Nigerian warplanes killed more than 200 rebels threatening Freetown, the capital. On Sunday Alpha jets in service with the Ecomog intervention force attacked a mountain cave hide-out near Hastings, on the outskirts of Freetown, killing at least 100 fighters from the Revolutionary United Front and the United Front. Planes were also seen north of the capital and Ecomog troops retook control of the nearby town of Freetown.

Britain's aid package is part of a commitment to bolster the shaky Government of President Kabbah, restored last year with the help of arms and private forces provided by Sadrine International, the mercenary group.

The defeated junta, which fled into the bush, maiming a terrorising civilians, has joined forces with the RUF and during the past two weeks has made sweeping gains, threatening the capital and the Government.

The Foreign Office said yesterday that there was no longer any arms embargo on the Sierra Leone Government, following the modification by the United Nations of an earlier blanket embargo. But Britain still operates an arms embargo on Nigeria, which provides the bulk of the Ecomog forces.

Given the tight Foreign Office budget, the military aid is

considerable and follows the £2 million already paid to a United Nations Trust Fund supporting Ecomog. The total, larger than most British humanitarian packages, reflects Britain's determination to keep in office a democratic Government that has already caused Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, considerable embarrassment over the Sandline affair. Tony Lloyd, the Foreign Office Minister responsible for Africa, said that the aid was "a demonstration of our commitment to help bring stability to Sierra Leone and promote democracy both in that country and more widely in Africa".

On Monday, Nigerian troops, backed by Sierra Leonean civilian militia, beat back a rebel attempt to enter Freetown via Hastings. The rebel force of more than 1,000 men had reached the eastern city gates, and Ecomog sources said many were infiltrators in civilian clothes who had slipped past Hastings.

The rebels split into two groups after the first attack, one comprising renegade soldiers from the Sierra Leone Army and the other made up of RUF fighters who have been harrying successive Gov-

ernments for more than five years.

Insurgents still control most of the north of the country, and have conscripted thousands of able-bodied men and women, training them to fight. A systematic campaign of mutilation, hacking off the arms and legs of captured civilians, has left many villagers terrified of the rebels and unable to resist them. Those fleeing to Freetown have reported summary executions of people the rebels consider sympathetic to the Kabbah Government.

A Rome-based Catholic news agency yesterday reported that one of the leaders of the ousted junta, Solomon Anthony James Musa, was killed in the recent fighting. He was the de facto Prime Minister of the junta which seized power in May 1997 and was ousted last February.

The rebel forces were swiftly pushed back after President Kabbah was reinstated. But they regrouped and launched a new campaign after their leader, Freddy Sankoh, was sentenced to death for treason in October. In prison in Freetown, he is appealing against the sentence.

The upsurge in fighting threatens to unleash a new wave of refugees, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said on Tuesday. A spokesman said that more than 100 refugees have fled into neighbouring Guinea over the past few days. But 5,800 more people in the border area of Kambia are poised to follow suit if clashes between rebels and the intervention force continue. An estimated 350,000 people are displaced within Sierra Leone.



President Mugabe, angered by his treatment in London, is now calling for seizure of farms owned by absentee lords. "They will lose their little Englands," he said

Mugabe wants to grab 'lands of British lords'

FROM JAN RAATH IN HARARE

PRESIDENT MUGABE has promised to seize farms owned by absentee British aristocrats and says he will pay with an IOU.

"Those British lords who have their little Englands and are absentee landlords will lose their little Englands," he was quoted as saying yesterday in the state-controlled Herald newspaper. Compensation was the responsibility of the British Government, the colonisers of what was formerly Rhodesia, he said.

But Mr Mugabe, whose Government last month confiscated 941 white-owned farms in Zimbabwe, is talking about an era long past. The big landowners, such as the Salisbury, Cranborne and Cecil families, sold their holdings around independence in 1980 and left.

The President, still smarting from his visit to London last month where the media denounced him as a tyrant, also made ominous references

to the estimated 400 British companies in Zimbabwe. They controlled "a large portion" of the economy, and every year sent millions of pounds in profits to Britain.

British companies should give shares in their Zimbabwean businesses to black Zimbabweans, as part of the Government's plan to "indigenise" the economy, he said. Black empowerment in Zimbabwe has become synonymous with cronyism and corruption.

where the conspicuous wealth of the friends and relatives surrounding Mr Mugabe continues to swell in contrast to the widespread poverty and crumbling infrastructure that affects the rest of the country.

Mr Mugabe said Britain ought to be supporting his land reform and black empowerment programmes. Instead of "leading the bandwagon of criticism and malicious statements" aimed at tarnishing the country's image abroad.

WORLD IN BRIEF

Millennium unit set up by Israel

Jerusalem: Israel yesterday unveiled sweeping plans for coping with so-called "messianic madness" among Christian pilgrims arriving in the Holy Land for millennium celebrations (Christopher Walker writes).

It is estimated that some 40,000 of the expected 4.5 million visitors will require psychiatric help, with 800 needing to be treated in mental hospitals. Leading agents from Shin Bet and Mossad, the Israeli domestic and foreign secret services, have been recruited into a new unit to deal with millennial cults and individuals who believe they are biblical figures.

Cash for Stasi boss

Berlin: Erich Mielke, 91, once head of East Germany's secret police, has got about £1,000 (£714) compensation for his three months in jail in 1991. Herr Mielke was accused of shooting people at the Berlin Wall, but was found too ill to stand trial. He was jailed for six years in 1993 for the 1931 murder of two policemen but was freed as senile in August 1995. (AFP)

Korean actress flees

Seoul: Kim Hye Young, right, a popular North Korean film star, has defected to South Korea with her family. She, her parents and two sisters arrived in August but the defection was kept secret to protect their safety. Kim Hye Young, 26, who was in the Pyongyang national theatre troupe, has started in seven films. (AFP)



Death row killing

Parchman: Donald Leroy Evans, a drifter who claimed to have killed dozens of people in 23 states, was stabbed to death by a fellow death row inmate at Mississippi State Penitentiary here. Evans, 41, sentenced for strangling a girl aged ten, won notoriety after his 1991 arrest, saying he was a serial killer, but he later said the confessions were a hoax. (AP)

Coin smuggler held

Budapest: Hungarian customs officials have arrested a Bulgarian citizen trying to smuggle Ancient Greek, Roman, Thracian and Syrian coins, worth more than £37,000, to Britain. The 1,567 bronze and silver coins, dating from 3BC, were found in a bag hidden behind the car stereo of the man, who was trying to enter Austria with a false passport. (AFP)

Bullring ban sought

Madrid: The Madrid regional government's top official for children's rights wants bullfights declared off-limits for those under 14, saying that youngsters can be traumatised by watching bulls bleed to death. The proposal would make the region the second in Spain to bar young children from arena bullfights. Catalonia, in the northeast, did so last month. (AP)

Brief encounters

Bucharest: A wife given lacey underwear for her 35th birthday that was too small became suspicious when a woman guest at her party said she had received some that was too large. The next day a shop assistant confirmed that her husband had bought two sets of lingerie. After swapping underwear with "the other woman", she filed for divorce. (AP)

Law chief says police injured Anwar

FROM AGENCY FRANCE-PRESS IN KUALA LUMPUR

MALAYSIAN police inflicted the injuries on Anwar Ibrahim, the former Deputy Prime Minister, that drew international condemnation after his detention, the authorities admitted yesterday.

A statement by Mohd Abdullah, the Attorney-General, was released as Mr Anwar's corruption trial was told that semen stains on a mattress being used in evidence against him could have been planted.

Mr Mohd said that he had found the police "fully responsible" for injuries suffered by

Mr Anwar in September, when the former leader was in police custody. But the person responsible had not been identified. Mr Mohd's statement, reported by the Bernama news agency, added that medical reports indicated that he had suffered some of his injuries before he was arrested.

Mr Anwar was dismissed 18 days later. He had a black eye when produced for his first court appearance and said he had been beaten unconscious on his first night in custody.



Anwar: The police "fully responsible for attack"

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Yemen terror imperils port deal

FROM DANIEL MCGRORY IN ADEN

AMERICAN military chiefs fear the recent terrorist violence in Yemen may jeopardise their secret deal to establish an important shipping base at Aden.

The Pentagon plans to use the former British colony to bunker 600,000 barrels of marine diesel and aviation fuel which will be used to service its naval operation in the Gulf against President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

As the first US warship docked in Aden under the deal, Scotland Yard detectives and the FBI were working yes-

terday to discover who was behind the Islamic group that kidnapped 16 Western tourists and was planning to bomb five British targets in the port city.

One senior US official said: "This eruption of Islamic terrorism in Yemen could not have come at a worse time, when we are considering hundreds of American military personnel walking around Aden on shore leave."

The priority for the ten-man FBI team sent to Yemen is to discover whether the al-Jihad group is trained and funded

by the Saudi billionaire, Osama bin Laden, accused by Washington of various terrorist outrages.

FBI sources say they are certain that bin Laden has bases in mountainous southern Yemen where his terrorists fled after being forced out of Sudan and Afghanistan in the past

seven months. It has also been disclosed that US intelligence agents were warned six weeks ago that Hamas was planning to shift its headquarters from Khartoum to Yemen. A week later an armed gang shot an American aid worker in an ambush outside his home which

is near where the kidnap of the tour group took place. One of the gunmen who escaped after wounding Rich Bonney is said to have also taken part in last week's shootout in the desert in which four hostages, including three Britons, were killed. The Pentagon's ambitions for Aden will depend on the

FBI's findings, although naval chiefs did decide to go ahead with plans for the frigate, USS Klakring, to dock off Aden's Prince of Wales pier, built by the British in 1919. None of the crew was allowed off the frigate which was returning from the Gulf. As she docked amid strict security, an Iranian tanker passed close by.

Until the British left in 1967, Aden was the world's second busiest port. It was a coaling station for ships sailing to India and the Far East and its natural deep waters can berth the biggest aircraft carriers.

The US Navy needs the port because it is closing its operation at Djibouti and the Pentagon is worried about the future use of bases in Gulf states, including Saudi Arabia.

The fuel bunker is being constructed by British technicians next to the terminal for the new Aden Freeport that will open in March. The US base should have been operating by now, but the first fuel is not due in the tanks until next month.

The Americans also want to refurbish a nearby refinery so that it can produce the quality of marine diesel and aviation fuel they need to store.

American sources said that they will review plans to allow sailors and airmen shore leave during daylight; the decision will upset local traders and bar owners who had expected business not seen since the British occupation.

American security officials, conscious of the security threat in the region, wanted to train units of Yemeni troops in hostage rescue, but were forbidden to do so by American diplomats concerned about the

Sanaa Government's human rights record. Washington was also unimpressed by Yemen's recent decision of Operation Desert Fox against Saddam. US officials thought that President Salhi's Government had learnt its lesson after condemning the Gulf War and then seeing to million Yemenis expelled from Gulf states and the cutting of Western aid.

British authorities are believed to have asked Yemen about using its former barracks at Fuqum in Little Aden as the West seeks bases in the Gulf. After the diplomatic wrangles of the past week over the conduct of the bungled kidnap rescue, two senior Scotland Yard detectives from the

anti-terrorist squad together with British criminal, David Pearce, had discussions with Tah A. H. M. Ghannem, the Governor of Aden. The focus of the investigation will be

questioning Abu Hassan, a jailed kidnap leader, and the terrorists arrested in Aden using fake British passports. They were said to be about launch bomb attacks on five targets, including the British consulate and the Anglican church. They said that the investigation will take time as urged, the authorities not proceed with its plans to convict and execute Hassan and Victor Henderson, the British Ambassador, met Hussa Mohammed Arab, the Yemen Interior Minister, yesterday about the investigation. Henderson denied reports that British ministers had said that they will block Yemen application to join the Commonwealth because of its handling of the kidnap incident.

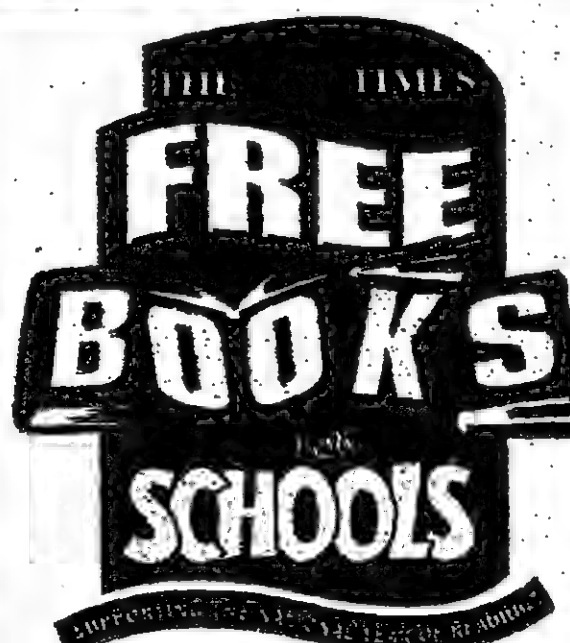


Aden port where the US Navy has organised a refuelling base, an arrangement thrown into doubt by the recent hostage-taking incident

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SEE THE BACK PAGE OF SECTION ONE FOR TODAY'S TOKEN

CHANGING TIMES

Iran group renews threat to Rushdie

FROM MICHAEL THEODOULOU IN NICOSIA

SALMAN Rushdie's life is under renewed threat from a shadowy, well-organised Iranian extremist group that has claimed responsibility for the recent murders of four dissidents and an attack on American tourists, a moderate Iranian newspaper said yesterday.

Zan, a usually well-informed woman's daily, said that the little-known Fedayeen (Devotees) of Pure Mohammedan Islam was "preparing to put into effect the historic fatwa" of the late Ayatollah Khomeini, who condemned the author to death in 1989 for alleged blasphemy in his novel, *The Satanic Verses*.

The group released a statement saying that it is using "all means at its disposal to plan the application of the fat-

wa", Zan said. It added that the group had repeated an earlier claim that it had killed two secular writers and Dasu. Forthar, the national leader, and his wife, Parvazeh, Eskandari. The group structure is said to include judicial section run by the judges, Zan added.

While any threat to Mr Rushdie will be taken seriously, too little is known about the group to gauge the level of danger. "To what extent it real or invented simply cause problems for Iran's international relations is unclear," an Iranian analyst said. "Assuming it does exist and did carry out the murders here, there is no way of knowing whether it has the capacity to act abroad."

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Mayor wrestles with new career

Mr. Ventura has also swapped his flannel shirts and snow boots for sober charcoal suits, and has accepted the gubernatorial perk of a chauffeur-driven limousine. He used to ride a Harley. But Mrs. Ventura, who begged him not to run, did appear at his inauguration ceremony at St. Paul, the state capital in Minnesota, a traditional festivity that will reach its climax on January 16, not with a glittering ball but a "people's celebration" for which tickets are already on sale, starting at \$10.

FROM DAMLAN, WHITEWORTH IN WASHINGTON

There was no immediate reaction to Havana's President Cliftons' announcement. Alejandro González, a Foreign Ministry official there, said: "We have only seen press releases on this subject. We do not have an official statement from the North American Government on this, so far now we do not have any reactions."

The White House stopped short of a full review of American policy towards Cuba, called for "a bipartisan group of Senators. Nevertheless, fierce opponents of the regime immediately attacked the initiative. Ileana Ros-

The measures build on the Cuba Democracy Act of 1992, which tightened the US embargo but also called for increased exchanges between Cubans and Americans.

Progress in contacts between the peoples — rather than the Governments — of the two countries have been



President Castro and his Communist regime are not intended to benefit from Washington's new measures which aim to "help the Cuban people"

the Baltimore Orioles traveled in Havana, perhaps this week to sound out Cuban officials on the possibility of one or two exhibition baseball games with a Cuban squad in March. Baseball is the most popular sport in Cuba, with the president himself — a former pitcher — a huge fan. Profits from the games would

The sales of food would be to non-governmental organisations and independent restaurants. The decision to reject senators' calls for a commission to review all aspects of US policy towards Cuba disappointed Senator John Warner

She added that the US shift in policy would "maintain pressure for democratic change" on the island nation while at the same time helping to advance "the dream of a Cuba where all can participate in . . . political life. We will continue to work with them on constructive ideas to promote democratic change."

BY DAMIAN WHITWORTH

where and no one to turn to.

Janet Reno, the Attorney General, has launched an investigation, involving the FBI and a clutch of government departments, into what she called the "serious problem of modern-day slavery".

The Washington Post yesterday published a catalogue of alleged abuse in the capital by foreigners who had flouted labour laws.

Mr. Makonnen has argued



Reno: ordered inquiry into slavery allegations

By GILES WHITTELL

Mr Cody appeared in dozens of prewar Westerns and worked with such directors as John Ford and Cecil B. De Mille, but was best-known for a one-minute commercial first broadcast in 1970 in which he paddled down a river past a belching smokestack and turned to the camera in front of a littered roadside, a single tear rolling down his cheek.

Obituary, page 19

FROM KAREN LOWE
IN LOS ANGELES

Kuan Nen Chen, 17, a student, was safely reunited with his mother nearly three weeks after he was abducted as he arrived home on December 15. He was climbing out of his car when two men slapped tape over his mouth and grabbed him.

FBI agents tracked down the owner of the car and soon located the Temple City

Xue Han Wang, of New York, both originally from Fuzhou, were arrested and charged with hostage-taking. If they are convicted, they could be sentenced to life in prison. (AFP)

[illegible]

In search of the energy inside a vacuum

Physics can show there is energy in a vacuum, but will we be able to tap into it, asks Nigel Hawkes

A perfect vacuum is the absence of everything, unless you are a quantum physicist. Then you know that empty space is actually filled with particles which wink in and out of existence too rapidly to be seen. Even at absolute zero, a vacuum is sweating energy at every pore, unlikely as it seems. Some bolder spirits, touched by millennial fever, have even claimed that this "zero-point energy" is the fuel of the future which will generate electricity, replace crude oil and propel mankind across the vast emptiness of space.

At a laboratory near Austin in Texas, rather grandly called the Institute for Advanced Studies — an echo of the better-known institution at Princeton where Einstein spent his final years — a small team led by the physicist Dr Harold Puthoff is testing the claims of inventors who say that they can tap into zero-point energy. Over the past decade, Dr Puthoff has examined at least ten devices and found none that work.

To mainstream scientists, the effort smacks of cold fusion. But unlike that debacle, in this case at least the energy is real, as physicists have recently shown in experiments which confirm quantum theory's predictions to a nicety. While this brings us no closer to exploiting zero-point energy, or even to knowing how much of it there is, it is always satisfying when a long-standing prediction is proved true.

But first, why should zero-point energy even exist? The simplest explanation comes from Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, which declares that it is impossible to know simultaneously both the position and the momentum of a particle. At absolute zero, this principle would be violated if particles were

absolutely still, since then both position and momentum would be known. So they must continue to jiggle about, even when they no longer have any thermal motion. The same rule applies to energy. That means that even in empty space, energy continues to exist; and because energy and mass are equivalent, the vacuum energy must be able to create particles which flash briefly into existence, then disappear. Such ephemeral events are called fluctuations.

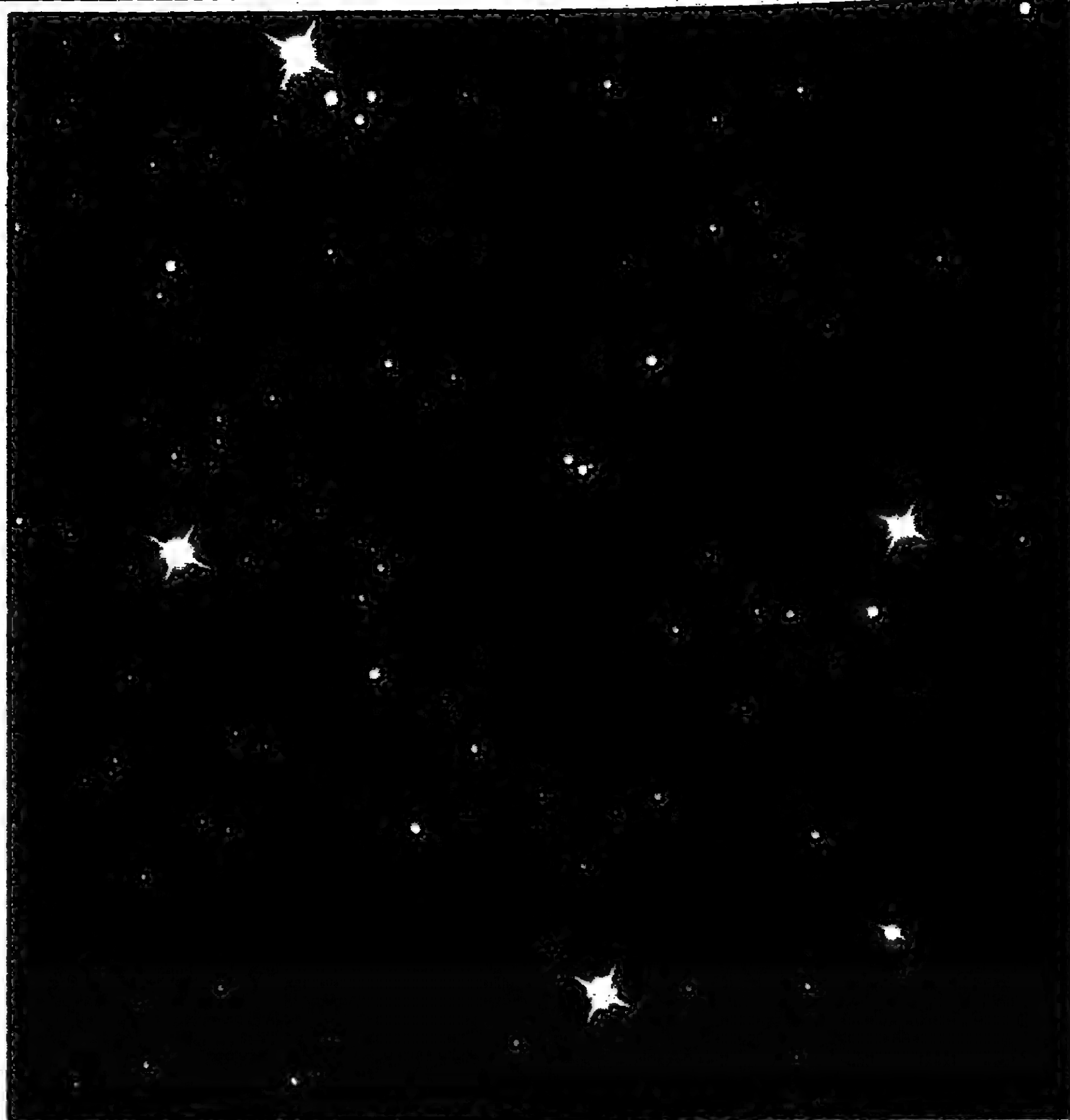
In 1948 the Dutch physicist Hendrik Casimir outlined a way of detecting this vacuum energy. He argued that it should manifest itself as a tiny force acting between two

In empty space, particles wink in and out of existence

flat reflecting plates held very close together, but not touching, in a vacuum. If the gap were small enough, he reasoned, it would form a channel so narrow that only certain wavelengths of light, and their respective particles, could be contained within it.

Just as driving into a tunnel cuts off a radio signal, so the narrow channel would cut off some of the wavelengths of light. But outside the channel would be photons of all wavelengths. The discrepancy would result in a force pushing the plates together — a force no bigger than a speck of dust falling on the top plate but still, in theory, detectable.

Last year the physicist Steven Lamoreaux, of Los Alamos National Laboratory, measured the Casimir force for the first time. His experimental arrangement was more complex than Casimir envisaged, consisting of two gold-coated quartz bars and a gold-plated sphere, arranged close together so that the effect of the Casimir force was to cause one bar, hanging on a wire, to twist. He then measured the force needed to restore it to its



The Pleiades, an open star cluster 400 light years from Earth. Devotees of zero-point energy claim that it could help mankind to cross the vastness of interstellar space.

original position. It agreed with Casimir's prediction to within 5 per cent. "We're excited: it confirms a very basic prediction of quantum electrodynamics," said Ed Hinds of Sussex University.

Last month Umar Mohideen and Anustree Roy, of the University of California at Riverside, went a step further, using an atomic force microscope to position an aluminium-coated sphere less than a thousandth of a millimetre away from a plate and to measure the force between them. After correcting for errors, they concluded in *Physical Review Letters* that the force they measured was within 1 per cent of the predicted value. And by enlarging and cooling the ball, "we are confident that we can improve the accuracy by a factor of 1,000", Dr Mohideen said.

So yet again, quantum theory has triumphed over common sense; the world really is an oddly constructed place. But is zero-point energy just a curiosity, or does it underlie some of the large-scale structure of the Universe? Can it ever be put to use? Here is where enthusiasts such as Dr Puthoff and most of the rest of the physics community part company.

To many scientists, the effort smacks of cold fusion

would in turn generate gravitational fields out of all proportion to anything we observe in the Universe around us. Even if simplifications are made to eliminate the infinities, the number remains dauntingly large — according to the Nobel Prize-winning physicist Steven Weinberg, ten to the power of 120 times larger than the observed expansion of the Universe allows. "This must be the worst failure of an order-of-magnitude estimate in the history of science," he says.

If so, there must be a lot less vacuum energy than the equations suggest. There might be enough, per-

haps, to contribute to an anti-gravity effect, observed in the accelerating expansion of the Universe described in last week's Science Briefing. Certainly Dr Lamoreaux's experiments do not indicate a huge untapped reservoir of energy waiting to be exploited. His experiment extracted 10-15 joules, a piffling quantity. He resents having become a hero to a group for whom he has little time. "The zero-point energy community is more successful at advertising and self-promotion than it is at carrying out bona fide scientific research," he told *Scientific American*.

None of this worries Dr Puthoff. He believes that zero-point energy provides the force that stops electrons in atoms spiralling down until they hit the nucleus; and also suspects that inertia, the reluctance of

objects to be accelerated, is caused by the drag of moving through a zero-point field. If so, he argues, then it would be worth trying to manipulate the field to reduce inertia, which would enable a rocket to go much faster, and hence much further, on the same fuel load. NASA, the American space agency, convened a meeting at which this idea was discussed, to the disgust of some physicists.

Although it is never wise to declare a possible source of energy moonshine — as Lord Rutherford once did of nuclear power — the prospect of civilisation subsisting on a vacuum seems improbable in the extreme.

Even in a quantum universe, with its Alice in Wonderland quality, that would be too close to getting something for nothing.

Microarrays can carry 10,000 fragments of DNA — and will eventually diagnose disease

Genetics' smartcard

A NEW device is set to revolutionise biology. No bigger than a credit card but carrying up to 10,000 fragments of DNA, the microarray will do for genetics what the silicon chip did for computing. It is a safe bet that in the next century, microarrays will be diagnosing disease; assessing an individual's risk of cancer or heart disease; or monitoring the progress of a drug treatment.

Last week a team from the Medical Research Council's Clinical Sciences Centre at

Hammersmith Hospital used a microarray to identify a gene in rats that causes a condition akin to insulin resistance syndrome in human beings. The discovery, published in *Nature Genetics* and reported in some editions of *The Times* on December 29, is important not only because the syndrome is an early pointer to obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease, but also because it illustrates the power of microarrays to penetrate the genetic jungle and pinpoint a single gene.

The method works because DNA is a double-stranded molecule which, when split into single strands, does its best to double up again. But it can only do so if it finds the right single strand with which to form a pair. The strands consist of chains of bases — ade-



SCIENCE BRIEFING
Nigel Hawkes

nine, cytosine, guanine and thymine — which always form the same pairs. Adenine on one strand always binds to thymine, while cytosine binds to guanine. This means that two single strands of DNA

will fasten together like a zipper, but only if their sequences are complementary.

A microarray consists of a solid surface of glass or silica, with single-stranded fragments of DNA arranged in columns and rows across its surface. Creating the chips has something in common with building a silicon circuit. The end product is a flat surface with a huge number of short lengths of DNA floating from it, like tendrils of seaweed rising from the ocean floor.

To use the chip, a DNA sample is taken from a patient, purified, split into single strands, then cut into short lengths. Each piece is then tagged with a fluorescent molecule, and washed over the chip. Where DNA strands in the mixture hit a complementary sequence on the chip, they

bind. The better the match, the stronger the bond. Then a chemical is washed over the chip to break all but the strongest bonds. Finally a computer reads the position of the fluorescent tags still attached to the surface, and matches them to the original length of DNA attached to that site.

In this way a microarray can be used to "interrogate" a sample of DNA and to identify the DNA sequences within it. "In a single afternoon, people have confirmed work that took several years using conventional gene sequencing processes," Ed Hurwitz, of Affymetrix, a California company which has pioneered the technology, told *New Scientist*. *Nature Genetics* has produced a supplement on the subject, the Chipping Forecast, available on the Internet as a Web special at <http://genetics.nature.com>. One day, the entire human genome will be available on a chip, or range of chips. Then results will really pour in.

Sex, shakes and the single stickleback

AMONG male sticklebacks, size really doesn't matter. What the females want is not a big mate, but one who can shake that thing. The better the shaker, the more desirable he is, according to Sara Ostlund and Ingrid Ahnfeldt, zoologists from Uppsala University in Sweden.

They studied the 15-spined stickleback, *Spinachia spinachia*, a species in which the male provides the main care for offspring: building nests, cleaning and protecting the eggs, and fanning them with his pectoral fins.

The point of fanning is to oxygenate the embryos, to improve their chances of survival. The optimum fanning style is achieved in short but vigorous bouts in which the highest possible beat rate is reached. So females can do themselves a favour by picking as mates those males who can do this well.

But how are they to know in advance? The zoologists report in *Animal Behaviour* that shaking is how the males advertise their skills. They do so by bending their heads upwards and shaking very fast for about a second, alternating the behaviour with other courtship rituals such as showing the nest, approaching the female, or biting her.

Valuable prize for lunar prospectors

WHAT use is the Moon? While it is certainly not paved with gold, it does harbour a gas that may one day be as valuable as helium-3. This rare isotope of helium, 1,000 times less common than the regular helium-4, could provide the fuel for a future generation of fusion reactors, in which it would be combined with deuterium — a form of hydrogen — to produce abundant energy.

Helium-3 is far more plentiful on the Moon than on Earth because the Moon captures it from the solar wind, a flow of particles from the Sun. It is estimated that 750,000 tonnes of helium-3 lie in the top three metres of the Moon's surface, when a mere 30 tonnes in a fusion reactor would be enough to meet the annual energy demands of the entire American economy. Now planetary scientists from the US Geological Survey have produced a map of the distribution of helium-3 for future prospectors.

The best areas lie in the maria, the Moon's dark seas, but regions with titanium-rich rocks are also pinpointed because they trap the gas. But nobody is likely to be tramped in the rush to exploit it. At best, helium levels in the lunar soil do not exceed 20 parts per billion, which means shifting a lot of soil for not much helium.



مكتبة ابن زليخ

Do you have to have big breasts to work here?

Saturday morning. Hunched over *The New York Times*, Peter lets out a sudden groan. "Tragic news," he cries. "The Manhattan Hooters is going bankrupt. We must go there before it closes."

In fact he has been trying to organise a trip to Hooters since it opened here on 56th Street, just off Broadway, a year ago. I have not been enthusiastic. With 232 restaurants across the country, Hooters is the sixth-largest restaurant chain in America; however, the attraction is more than its food. Like most of the other chains, it serves the standard fare of burgers, chicken wings and chef salads suffocated with blue cheese dressing. But Hooters offers an extra delicacy: a flotilla of friendly waitresses, famous for their generous breasts, cantilevered by push-up bras into skimpy crop-tops accompanied by equally skimpy orange shorts.

"I'd better get a group together while we can still go," says Peter briskly, reaching for the phone. "Michael? Did you see that Hooters has filed for chapter 11 protection from creditors? We're thinking of..."

"Absolutely!" interrupts Michael. "Count me in." "Hooters? That's my Dad's favourite restaurant," says Dana, laughing. "Can I bring him, too?"

I call to make a reservation on the free-phone number. "Burger and fries, burger and fries, burger and fries..." says the message imitating a stock record. "Tired of the same old menu? Come to Hooters and enjoy our gourmet hotdogs. You can add mushrooms!" Then the receptionist answers.

"Hello, Hooters."

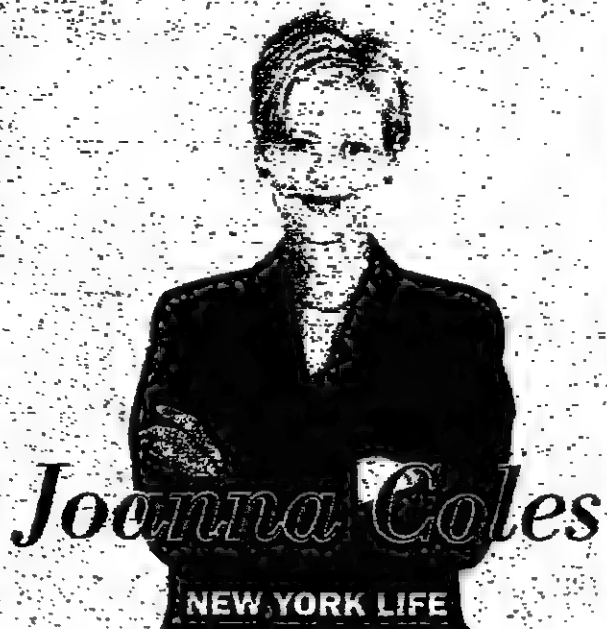
"Can I make a reservation for tonight?" I ask.

"You want to make a reservation?" This in itself is our first warning. In a town where you can wait weeks for a booking, and Le Cirque, five minutes walk away on Madison, claims to receive 5,000 calls a day from diners begging for a table, the girl from Hooters sounds incredulous.

"Yes, for six people."

"Er, OK then, but there's really no need."

Saturday night. From the outside, Hooters, perched on the second floor above a 24-hour parking garage, is not easy to



Joanna Coles
NEW YORK LIFE

spot. Its entrance is up some steps leading to a concrete courtyard, where the owner later dolefully admits he was recently mugged. The six of us arrive promptly at 6pm but are soon to be disappointed.

"Where are the hooters?" exclaims Peter, as a waitress sails past in a shapeless white tracksuit and Ross, the man-

ager, shows us to a high, round table whose centerpiece is a fixed roll of paper towel. Dana's father, a veteran of several Hooters bars in Virginia, looks confused. "The interior is kind of the same but one of the girls from my local Hooters, at Newport News, went on to be a *Playboy* centrefold," he says. "I

don't think anyone here's gonna do that."

Another fully tracksuited girl goes past and, noting our chagrin, Ross apologises. "We are having a little heating problem..." Outside it is a perishing 15F and one of the coldest days I can remember.

Though the interior is the regulation sauna-style orange pine, reminiscent of a ski chalet, it is distinctly cool.

"Hi, I'm Anna. Welcome to Hooters. I'm your waitress for this evening," says Anna, hopping up on to one of the high stools and settling in as if to join us for the evening. This is another of Hooters' unique selling points which goes down so well west of the Hudson. While they take orders, the waitresses are required to join your table and chat.

Though slight, Anna's cleavage is bravely on display, peeping from the top of her crop-top. As we look around, it becomes clear that she is the only one sporting enough to expose any part of her body at all. The other girls are sticking to their sweats, their only concession to Hooters being the red flashing badges they wear on each nipple.

The wall above us is decorated with imitation road signs. "Caution: blondes thinking!" Next to it is another one: "Warning: high levels of hydrogen peroxide in the air." And another, featuring twin humps, warns simply: "Bumps."

On the neighbouring table a large man has just inserted long ribbed stems of celery up each nostril and is nodding his head, barking like a walrus to cheers from his companions. Anna hands us each a paper plate and an anti-septic wipe.

"Hooters" — delightfully tacky yet unrefined, boasts the menu, recalling the original dilemma faced in 1983 by the start-up team of Bowles. The atmosphere is what she brings a gleam to men's eyes everywhere besides beer and chicken wings and an occasional winning football season? Hooters — it is supposed they were into owls!

"Yeah, that owl thing confused people a bit," says Dana's father. "At the grand opening in Newport News, grandmothers took children along thinking it was a nature restaurant."

We order two Sample Platters — "A little bit of everything. Trust us, we never lie."

At a time when New York's Mayor is closing down the city's sex clubs, Hooters' girls are

more *Baywatch* than Sally Bowles. The atmosphere is what she brings a gleam to men's eyes everywhere besides beer and chicken wings and an occasional winning football season? Hooters — it is supposed they were into owls!

"Yeah, that owl thing confused people a bit," says Dana's father. "At the grand opening in Newport News, grandmothers took children along thinking it was a nature restaurant."

chise, sitting gloomily at the bar. Given that it now has two extremely successful S&M restaurants, is Manhattan too sophisticated? Its taste in sex too dark for this wholesome Midwestern version?

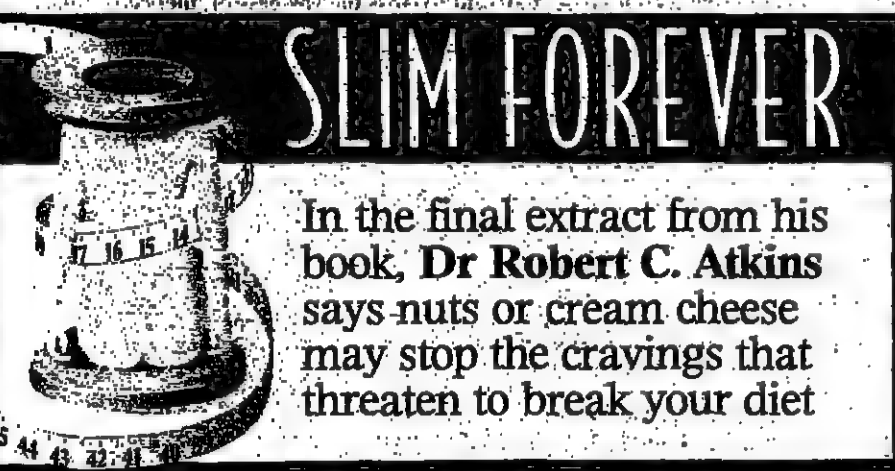
"No, no. The problem is that the landlord's not giving me enough signage exposure," he grumbles, flicking his tiny ponytail. "No one can find us."

"Do you have to have big breasts to work here?" I inquire.

"No," he insists. "Just the right personality." Hanging from the ceiling above him, a promotional inflated Budweiser sofa is leaking air with a soft hiss.

"Whenever I go to a different city I always look for the Hooters," says Roberto Rosado, a broker, roosting at the bar in a black woolly cap and alpine sweater. "I came by for a beer once, wanted to be alone, but I loved the staff. I like the Miami Beach Hooters. It's just like this — only 60 degrees warmer."

How to silence the body when it cries out for a doughnut



In the final extract from his book, Dr Robert C. Atkins says nuts or cream cheese may stop the cravings that threaten to break your diet



Beware the binge: if your body screams out for a particular food, you have activated an addiction. It is metabolic — and you must tough it out

The Atkins programme is not just about losing weight. It helps you to keep excess pounds off for ever by adding some of your most desired foods to the basic diet you lost weight on. It also recognises the fact that sometimes it is just impossible to resist a craving or the desire to binge — and shows you how to break the diet and survive.

If you do succumb to that craving and go back to sugar, bread or fruit, you suddenly discover that you must have these foods and that no day or meal feels right without them. If this should happen, you will notice that the need which develops is genuinely physical. It isn't simply that a doughnut tastes good and that you'd like to have it. No, your body roars with anxiety and passion for that doughnut. And then you know — you have activated an addiction, just like an alcoholic with his bottle.

This isn't shameful. It's physical, it's chemical, it's metabolic — and that's precisely why you must avoid it. Most of you already know that for a significant portion of your life carbohydrates have been stronger than you. But even now you must never ignore a craving; it may pass but it is likely to reappear momentarily when your resolve is weak. And then you break the diet.

Since craving is part of addiction, that could trigger a cycle of addictive eating behaviour. Your craving appeared, most likely, in a relatively fasting state; it was triggered by a fall in blood glucose and your body perceived a need to put a brake on the falling glucose level and gave a signal that sweets were needed.

Change your physiology from a fasting to a fed state by eating something. In Atkins diet language, food, rich food, and plenty of it — but, of course, fat and protein food with very little or no carbohydrate. This will stabilise your blood glucose and all the other constituents that give rise to

the craving signal. The best foods to beat a craving are macadamia nuts, the diet's best friend. Other nut choices are walnuts, pecans or brazil. Others are cream cheese or rich dessert cheese.

You can also do this with something sweet — artificially so — and with whipping cream. Put three or four tablespoons of whipping cream into a glass and top it with a diet soft drink, or you may opt for diet gelatin dessert with whipping cream. Or try fried pork rinds which sound terribly fatty but, in fact, contain nearly none. Virtually all the fat has been rendered off.

Similarly, if you binge, it is better to binge on protein/fat foods. Not because you can't gain a pound or two if you put away too many thick steaks, but because protein foods are fundamentally self-limiting. Everyone has eaten 30 biscuits in one sitting at some time, but how many people have eaten ten hard-boiled eggs at one sitting? People just don't do

Protein and fat foods satiate appetite too quickly. The crucial fact about protein foods is that they don't unleash a metabolic tidal wave in your body. Very few people get protein addiction. Your blood glucose level doesn't rise sharply and fall when you eat an omelette.

On reaching your ideal weight, move on to the maintenance diet. Here you no longer need to practise a ketogenic diet, since ketosis/lipolysis by definition involves an element of fat loss. Newly slim people are no longer trying to shed pounds so they don't burn fat. But here is the catch that many dieters don't understand: there is very little leeway before you break through the other Critical Carbohydrate Level — the Critical Carbohydrate Level for Maintenance, the one at which you begin to gain.

A typical person of average metabolic resistance may find he must stay on between 40 and 60 grams of carbohydrate daily. Eating more than the 40

prevents him from losing more pounds and becoming too thin; eating less than the 60 prevents weight gain.

Once you are on the maintenance diet you can eat most vegetables, nuts and berries. You can cautiously reintroduce the vegetables containing more than 10 per cent carbohydrate, as well as whole grains such as oats, barley, millet or buckwheat. You may even be able to handle an occasional potato and a fruit a day. You can begin to use recipes containing some carbohydrates.

But the last choice for you, the truly hazardous indulgence, is sweets. Frankly, you should restrict your consumption of sweets made with real sugars to the occasional slice of birthday cake. Make your own sweets with artificial sweeteners. And remember to be endlessly wary of sugar and corn syrup, white flour and corn starch. Look at labels on packaged foods and avoid like the plague those that contain sugar, corn syrup, honey, maltose, dextrose, fructose, lactose, sorbitol and other variations. Use caffeine and alcohol in moderation.

And if you find yourself gaining weight, don't put off dealing with it — go straight back to the induction phase of the diet. Never allow yourself to be more than a two-week diet away from that goal weight. Do not go back to your maintenance diet without first losing all you have regained. It is simple. A salad a day of carbohydrate and you have slashed your weight back to perfect in as little as six to eight days, or two to three weeks if you have high metabolic resistance.

Extracted from Dr Atkins' New Diet Revolution, published by Vermilion at £4.99. Times readers can order it, free of postage/packaging, by calling The Times Bookshop, 0900 134459. Copyright Dr Robert C. Atkins 1999.

SUPPLEMENTS FOR HEALTHY LIVING

ALL my patients receive a fairly significant amount of vitamins, minerals, essential fatty acids and other nutritional agents. I prescribe them because I have learnt that nutrients can have an impact on anyone's health.

I have found many nutrients to be valuable, conferring health advantages even on healthy people, so I no longer consider that a person following a theoretically optimal — even "perfect" — diet could live as long or as healthily as he could were he to take dietary supplements as well. I have developed a dieter's formula of supplements. It includes:

Vitamin A 200 IU; Beta Carotene 500 IU; Vitamin D2 15 IU; Thiamine (B1) 5mg; Riboflavin (B2) 4mg; Vitamin C (Calcium Ascorbate) 120mg; Niacin (B3) 2mg; Nicotinamide 5mg; Panthothemic Acid 5mg; Calcium Pantothenate (B5) 25mg; Pyridoxal-5-Phosphate 20mg; Pyridoxine (B6) 20mg; Folic Acid 100mcg; Biotin 75mcg; Cyanocobalamin (B12) 30mcg; Vitamin E 20 IU; Copper (Sulfate) 200mcg; Magnesium (Oxide) 5mg; Choline (Bitartrate) 100mg; Inositol 50mg; Citrus Bioflavonoids 50mg; Chromium (Picolinate) 50mcg; Molybdenum (Sodium) 10mcg; Vanadyl Sulfate 15mcg; Selenium 40mcg; Octacosanol 150mg; N-Acetyl-L-cysteine 200mg; and L-Glutathione (reduced) 5mg — all in a base of Lactobacillus bulgaricus and bifidus acidophilus, B Complex and growth factors.

The suggested dosage is one to three tablets three times a day, after meals.

Catherine Collins, chief dietician at St George's Hospital, London, points out that this diet is not suitable for diabetics. Anyone starting a diet should first consult their doctor.

MEAL PLANNER IDEAS FOR THE MAINTENANCE DIET

BREAKFAST
(All foods on the Induction and the Ongoing Weight Loss diets are also included.)
• 1 grapefruit 135g (4½ oz) of honeydew or cantaloupe melon; 90g (3oz) of berries, any kind, with a dollop of soured cream or whipped cream (not pre-sweetened); you may add almond, lemon, orange or vanilla flavours; 125g (4oz) unflavoured yoghurt; corned beef hash; eggs Florentine; mushrooms, onions and eggs.

LUNCH
• Spinach egg pie — 900g (2lb) spinach leaves, 110g fresh basil, 200g ricotta cheese, 2 egg yolks, 450ml (1½ pt) whipping cream, 100g grated Parmesan cheese. Preheat oven to 230C/450F/Gas Mark 8. Cook spinach for 3 minutes. Cool. Squeeze out excess water. Place in food processor with basil, ricotta, egg yolks and cream. Add salt, pepper and grated nutmeg to taste. Purée. Sprinkle with Parmesan. Bake until golden. (Makes four servings, each with 13.6 carb. grams.)

DINNER
• Starters, soups and salads: chilled marinated stuffed fried mushrooms; cold sauté of scrambled egg and cottage cheese with asparagus; stuffed fried mushrooms with goat's cheese.

Main courses: chicken cacciatore; medallions of lamb with green lentils and bacon.

Side dishes: French beans with walnut sauce; stuffed peppers.

Desserts: Chocoberry truffles; rum truffles; zabaglione.

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CREATURES OF EUROLAND

Serpents lurk in the lush euro-pastures extolled by politicians

In Europe's financial centres this week, the euro has made a suave entry. That by no means assures future success. On the streets, euro-11 citizens are being exhorted by jubilant politicians and glossy brochures to revel in a "new era for Europe". So far, so painless; and so abstract. Since consumers will go on using their national coinage until 2002, the momentous irreversibility of what has just occurred has yet to sink in. So has the realisation that the advent of what is still a virtual currency cannot guarantee more jobs, a surge in growth or greater unity of political purpose among euro-land's 11 members.

On the contrary, as is clear from our recent series on euro-land's fault-lines, the euro's chief potential advantage, the transparency it will bring to commerce and to relative economic performance, will throw into sharp relief a host of tensions — between the EU's North and South, town and country, old and young, dynamic zones and the Belgian or French rustbelts, between Dutch high technology and no-hope lands in east Germany and Italy's south, between the sluggish core and the overheating Irish or Spanish "periphery".

This is far from being an optimal currency zone with compatible characteristics and needs. Despite strenuous efforts to close the gaps on public debt, deficits and inflation — efforts that will be politically hard to sustain now that victory has so resoundingly and prematurely been declared — huge disparities remain between and within countries. Farming, industry and services have very different weights in national GDPs. Unemployment is nil in Luxembourg and 19 per cent in Spain, where wages are half those in Germany.

Yet a single exchange rate and monetary policy must now fit all; and when only Finland and Luxembourg have public debt ratios below Maastricht's 60 per cent threshold and Belgium's and Italy's are more than double, there is little fiscal leeway. So flexible labour markets will have to compensate for lost autonomy. Yet few governments are prepared to take the political heat of rapid deregulation. The euro could, as its fans claim, make the EU more competitive; but that would risk social unrest which, in France and east Germany, could turn violent. If pan-European producers migrated to low-cost areas,

for example, this could in theory drag down labour costs at the core. In practice, France and Germany would demand tax-social security and wage harmonisation to combat "social dumping". For the Mezzogiorno, that would be the kiss of death.

Euro-land's public is ill-prepared, because ill-informed, for trouble ahead. Leaders bent on an elitist project, which has throughout ruthlessly disdained the need for democratic assent, have attacked sceptics as unpatriotic, while presenting the euro as a panacea for every European ill. Dominique Strauss-Kahn, the French Finance Minister, even asserts that the euro will make the EU the world's fastest growing region this year — a rash boast when Italy has downgraded its estimates to 1.8 per cent, and German growth could slow to a miserable 1.4 per cent. As for France's boast that the euro will mark "a new age in job creation", IMF simulations indicate that even if eurozone governments free up labour markets far more aggressively than most intend, by 2010 the euro will have cut sole queues by just 2 per cent. Without such flexibility, it expects unemployment to rise by then by 2 per cent.

The consequences could be explosive. That is why politicians, desperate for faster growth, are already on collision course against the European Central Bank which, by their own design, is statutorily immune to political pressure and barred by treaty from diluting its anti-inflationary mandate. Inflation already threatens the periphery; but the core countries need low interest rates and tight fiscal policy. They may well get the opposite. If Red-Green Germany, no longer an anchor of fiscal conservatism, overspends, the ECB could raise interest rates excessively as a show of strength.

Never in history has a multinational currency union succeeded. The EU has embarked on this unprecedentedly risky experiment with only a shallow, largely passive, consensus. Elites may feel more "European"; but as 2002 nears and people confront the trauma of pulsing currencies that form part of their sense of history and community, they may turn more, not less nationalist. In the lush euro-uplands of political rhetoric, lurk serpents of popular resentment ready to bite their masters' heels. It will take many years to find out whether these beasts can be truly tamed.

A SCOTTISH LANDSLIDE

Dewar plays on the pipes of auld resentment

In Scotland a mix of politics and populist sentiment ferment into a headstrong brew. Almost two centuries have passed since the Highland Clearances, when rapacious Scottish landowners forcibly evicted thousands of crofters so as to turn their estates over to more profitable sheep farming. But, in the national imagination, resentment of this historical cruelty still festers. Donald Dewar, the Scottish Secretary, was intent on soothing old grudges when he allowed land reform to rise to the top of his legislative agenda and, just over a year ago, set up the Land Reform Policy Group. But Mr Dewar was responding to more than merely nostalgic pressures yesterday when he unveiled a plan claimed by Labour to be the most important shake-up to land ownership since the Middle Ages. In Scotland, polls show the Labour Party increasingly threatened by nationalist sentiment. Mr Dewar hopes his radical proposals will compete with the Scottish National Party and thwart its further rise.

Certain aspects of the Scottish system of land tenure need overhauling. Medieval feudalism, long ended in England, endures in Scotland. Estate owners are feudal superiors, with rights and proscriptions over their vassals. This antiquated form of tenure is open to abuse. But the Land Reform Policy Group delegates specific responsibility for feudal reform to the Scottish Law Commission. Instead, its inquiries have addressed the emotive issue of large-scale land ownership.

The possession of sweeping Scottish

estates by aristocrats, the English and foreigners arouses animosity. Those who live and work on the land can find their farms sold from under their feet without consultation or warning. Under the stewardship of a few notorious absentee landlords, estates degenerate into depopulated wastelands, local communities wither and disperse. But several, more responsible landowners keep the economies of otherwise unviable tracts of land alive. Shooting and fishing provide seasonal employment, vast integral estates provide a haven for wildlife, bringing valuable tourist income to their isolated communities.

Mr Dewar may hope to seduce the Scottish electorate. But his proposals to enable compulsory government purchase of mismanaged estates are rashly inflammatory. Irresponsible landlords could be deterred by a few, carefully aimed reforms, such as the establishment of an accessible register of land owners or legally enforceable minimum upkeep requirements. Several of Mr Dewar's ideas will prove, when debated in the Scottish Parliament, to be sensible components of gradual reform. They will lead to increased diversity of land use, and offer Scottish people greater involvement in running their communities. But in playing to the nationalist grandstand, Mr Dewar not only risks pointlessly exacerbating divisions between land owners and tenants, but shows that the winning of party political advantage in this emotive issue has become as covetous and expedient as the Clearances ever were.

RELATIVE TRUST

Disturbing allegations of 'backdoor' euthanasia

Doctors today need to be as expert in ethics as anatomy. Fine judgments about the balance between relieving pain and preserving life are among the most difficult they have to face. Confronted with an elderly man who writhes in agony, a doctor might well feel it necessary to sedate him. Some doctors, however, are accused today of seeing sedation as more than just a temporary relief from pain.

Patients' children have noted that their parents have suffered from dehydration after sedation, and then died from an infection. The cry has been raised that doctors are allowing "backdoor euthanasia". Physicians argue they have simply been trying to ease suffering. As we report, there is a disturbing trend of such cases in Britain's hospitals. A thorough investigation of these deaths and clear guidance for doctors on the use of sedatives is essential if the medical profession is to avoid accusations of allowing doctors to play God with their patients.

While doctors treating patients in a persistent vegetative state must refer their case to the courts before switching off any life support system or denying them food and water, doctors whose patients have

common illnesses are left to "exercise their clinical judgment". Some, it seems, sedate their patients and deprive them of food and water — allegedly without the patient's authorisation or that of his or her family. If a patient dies, the death certificate will commonly state that the cause of death was the underlying medical condition, not dehydration. This lack of regulation and transparency must be addressed.

The British Medical Association is currently consulting its members on the guidelines surrounding this practice. It should recommend greater clarity in the way doctors make decisions about a patient's treatment, and how they communicate that decision to the patient or his family. If doctors are expected to refer a case of patient in a permanent vegetative state to the courts, why should they not be expected to do the same for other patients?

Yet this debate must not obscure the more crucial question: Why were doctors sedating their patients? There appear to be a multitude of reasons, depending on the specific circumstances. Whatever the case, the BMA should decide whether it is ethically right to help nature to take its course.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN Telephone 0171-782 5000

Educating children about 'soft' and 'hard' drugs

From the Chief Executive of the Standing Conference on Drug Abuse

Sir, You report (January 2) that Keith Hellawell, the UK Anti-Drugs Coordinator is questioning the effectiveness of education about drug use.

In the Government's White Paper, *Tackling Drugs to Build a Better Britain*, published last April, ten Secretaries of State said: "Action will be concentrated in areas of greatest need and risk. All drugs are harmful... And we will focus on those that cause the greatest damage including heroin and cocaine."

It is simply not true to say that drug education has "not worked". It is becoming clearer from research that drug education, delivered in the proper context and in the appropriate way, has the potential to reduce drug misuse or at least to delay the onset of experimentation. This in turn is more likely to reduce the prospect of a young person's drug use turning into a more harmful and risky dependent use.

Following the White Paper, the Department for Education and Employment published guidance to schools and the youth service on good practice and drug education, *Protecting Young People*. In his foreword to the guidance, Keith Hellawell said:

"Many schools have already established their drug education policies. Many examples of good practice have emerged. We need now to share this information and encourage all schools to take note of best practice..."

As Mr Hellawell will be aware, the national curriculum is under review and advisers and ministers are already considering the future role of personal, social and health education, including drug education. This will undoubtedly reinforce the need for a comprehensive programme to be delivered to all young people from age five onwards.

Keith Hellawell and the Govern-

ment need to recognise that throughout the world there is no drugs education programme that can absolutely guarantee to stop young people from ever taking drugs. If that is the sole objective, then the policy will fail. The aim has to be to reduce the damage that misuse of drugs can cause our young people.

Yours faithfully,
ROGER HOWARD,
Chief Executive,
Standing Conference on Drug Abuse,
32-36 Loman Street, SE1 0EE,
January 4.

From Dr Richard Cookson

Sir, Keith Hellawell wants school-teachers to stop talking to British children about "soft" drugs. But will this change in policy actually succeed in preventing children from taking Ecstasy and cannabis? The truth is that nobody knows — and we may be missing an excellent opportunity to find out.

A rigorously designed scientific trial of this new drugs education campaign should be carried out in a carefully selected region of Britain. Over time, scientists could compare drug-taking behaviour in this region with drug-taking behaviour in other regions. This would provide high-quality scientific evidence about what form of drugs education campaign works best, which would be of genuine and lasting value in dealing with the British drugs problem.

A blanket change in drugs education policy across the whole of Britain will not provide useful scientific evidence, because scientists will not be able to disentangle the effects (if any) of Hellawell's policy from those of all the other possible influences on drug-taking behaviour. And all the old drugs arguments will continue, based not on scientific evidence but on the usual heady mixture of gut instinct, ideology and the understandable

political pressures on the "drug czar" to be seen to be doing something.

Yours faithfully,
RICHARD COOKSON,
LSE Health,
London School of Economics,
Houghton Street, WC2A 2AE.
r.cookson@lse.ac.uk
January 2.

From Father Jim Duffy

Sir, My confidence in drug czar Keith Hellawell took a knock when I read that he was proposing that "reformed drug users could be used in more schools to give talks to pupils". Does he not realise that impressionable and immature, over-confident, young people, particularly those at greatest risk, will take one look at a reformed user or addict lecturing them about the dangers of drug use and say to themselves: "If he or she can kick the habit, so could I."

Keep reformed users out of the schools. Users or addicts who have failed to kick the habit and who are still not in control of their lives would be far more effective.

Yours sincerely,
JIM DUFFY,
5 Park Road, Rickmansworth,
Hertfordshire WD3 1HU.

From Mr A. J. Turner

Sir, You report that "there will be no jobs... in the Army or the police force" for those with a record of drug-related offences.

As the professionals who most influence youngsters are teachers and youth workers, perhaps that prohibition should be extended to them.

Your obedient servant,
ANDREW TURNER
(Vice-Chairman, Conservative National Education Society),
2 Northwood Place,
Cowes, Isle of Wight PO31 7TN,
January 2.

Peace in Cyprus

From Mr George Christodoulou

Sir, As a Cypriot whose ethnic background is Greek, I would like to respond to Mr Osman Sreter (letter, January 4).

I have never made the distinction between Greek and Turkish Cypriots because I believe that this distinction has greatly assisted in creating the present situation. Recalling times before the invasion by Turkey my own experiences are that both communities coexisted on the island peacefully. However, I believe the attitude towards Turks from the mainland was and is altogether different.

Now that there has been a great import of mainland Turks to northern Cyprus it should be very difficult for the island to be integrated. Therefore separation may be the only peaceful solution. However, Osman Sreter compares a mutually agreed exchange of population in 1923 with an invasion in 1974 which resulted in loss of life, mainly on the Greek side.

At that time Turkish Cypriots made up approximately 18 per cent of the population. Now mainland Turkey holds over 40 per cent of the island. Surely a statesmanlike response from Turkey would be to return some land as a positive move towards lasting peace.

Yours faithfully,
GEORGE CHRISTODOULOU,
57 The Broadway, NW7 3DA,
January 4.

Mandelson resignation

From Mr William Hamilton

Sir, Lord Rees-Mogg compares Peter Mandelson's case with examples from history ("The noble tradition of British risk-takers", January 4).

The point, surely, is that standards are stricter now, and that Mandelson's conduct as a minister was in breach of guidelines which his Government had endorsed, and which his party had assured the electorate it would observe if elected.

Yours faithfully,
WILLIAM HAMILTON,
Fine Cottage, Fernhurst,
Haslemere, Surrey GU27 3EE,
January 4.

Redstarts stop Dome?

From Dr David Carvel

Sir, How delightful it was to read of the humble and endangered black redstart threatening to halt work on the Millennium Dome (report, January 5). I am unsure if Lord Falconer of Thornton would be the best person to deal with this sensitively.

Is it not poignant that little black redstarts could hold up a massive white elephant?

Yours faithfully,
DAVID CARVEL,
13 Edgemont Street,
Shawlands, Glasgow G41 3EH.
carvel@compuserve.com
January 5.

Business letters, page 25

Letters to the Editor should carry a daytime telephone number. They may be sent to a fax number — 0171-782 5046. e-mail to: letters@the-times.co.uk

Efficiency resolutions for MPs

From Dr M. J. Burchell

Sir, As a university lecturer I have felt under siege for several years. External audits of my institution's procedures, my teaching, my research, efficiency gains (ie, enforced cuts in income), etc. are never-ending. But whereas I have previously objected to these external attacks on my occupation, I have recently come to understand them better. It has become clear to me that any group of professionals which has control over its own activities and revenues eventually comes to serve its own interests, and not those of the general public.

Given that by its attacks on the various professions the Government seems to share my beliefs, I trust it will rapidly adopt the following:

(1) The annual costs of the House of Commons should be identified. These should include salaries, pensions, heating, maintenance of fabric, full cost of all support staff, etc. There should then be imposed on this cost an annual efficiency gain of 5 per cent. This should last for five years, at which stage further annual efficiency gains should still be imposed.

Below the waves

From Mr James Benson

Sir, Your obituary of Captain William Meekie (December 29), while rightly applauding the ground-breaking contribution he made to the development of the first X-craft in 1942-43, was incorrect in two of its references to those craft.

First, these were four-man submarines, not two-man. Second, the prospects of an X-craft's crew returning safely from an attack were not limited to "escaping from the X-craft and making for the surface".

The explosive charges that one dropped beneath the keel of one's target were fitted with time-clocks affording up to an eight-hour delay

(2) Parliament should move to a fixed five-year cycle. All MPs should collect statistics on their own performance during the life of a Parliament, including attendance record, voting record, number of speeches given, number of amendments moved, number of laws introduced or passed, number of constituents' letters answered, etc. At the end of the cycle these statistics should be assessed by an external, independent body who will award each MP a rating 1 to 5 as appropriate. These ratings should be published in time for the elections to the next Parliament. To prevent MPs playing the system, the rules of this assessment should be changed every Parliament and published only two thirds of the way through a Parliament.

Given the Prime Minister's evident desire for constitutional reform, I look forward to rapid adoption of my proposals.

Yours faithfully,
M. J. BURCHELL,
121b Whitstable Road,
Canterbury, Kent CT2 7NR.
m.j.burchell@ukc.ac.uk
January 3.

before the four tons of Amatol exploded.

Even at a submerged speed of only one-and-a-half to two knots this still enabled these 5ft diameter craft to get well clear, as witness the successful attacks and returns to base achieved by several of Meekie's successors — among them Max Shean (X 24, Bergen, April 1944), the late Percy Westmacott (X 24, Bergen, September 1944) and Ian Fraser (XE 3, Singapore, July 1945).

Yours faithfully,
JAMES BENSON
(Co-author, *Above Us The Waves*, Harparr, 1953),
64 Harley House,
Marylebone Road, NW1 5HL,
December 29.

Addressing postcodes

From Mr M. G. Harman

Sir, Why should addresses contain more than the postcode, asks Mr Ray Perkins (letter, December 28; see also letters, January 1)? The simple answer is redundancy.

A single error in any character in a postcode will generally be correctable only with great difficulty. If, at all, whereas clerical errors in ordinary addresses are often corrected subconsciously without even being noticed.

Yours sincerely,
MICHAEL HARMAN,
Holmwood, 37 Upper Park Road,
Camberley, Surrey GU15 2EG,
January 2.

From Dr Tony Pearson

Sir, Mr Perkins will be pleased to know that I routinely use just a name and postcode on envelopes, sometimes with the first line of an address. The Post Office never fails to deliver.

Still, postcodes can be unnecessarily lengthy. I once sent a postcard from the United States bearing a friend's name and the address: 10W, UK. It reached its destination.

Yours etc.,
TONY PEARSON,
Poplar Farm, IP31 3SL.

From Mrs M. D. Wicks

Sir, I believe there is every reason to use our village and county when addressing envelopes.

Many of us in East Cornwall refuse to use the Plymouth, Devon, postcode we have been given, which does not reflect our area.

Businesses assume, on the basis of the code, that we are city dwellers and quote prices accordingly, and quite unfairly, particularly for services such as car insurance.

Yours sincerely,
M. D. WICKS,
Tresco, Calstock Road,
Gunnislake, Cornwall,
January 2.

From Mr Barrie Jenks

Sir, Sir Francis Beaufort would request that Reg Gale (letter, January 1) should either change his surname to Storm, or move next door to number eight so that his postcode address would be "meteorologically" correct, ie, Gale Force Eight or Storm Force Ten.

Yours faithfully,
BARRIE JENKS,
Bromsgrove Boaters, Norwintcliffe,
Redcliffe Street, Worcester WR3 7AP.
barriejenks@compuserve.com
January 1.

Roman dates lead to Latin headache

From Sir George Engle, QC

Sir, Writing 1999 in Roman numerals has its problems (report and leading article, January 1); but saying it in Latin, unless I am mistaken, needed no less than 11 syllables, viz *mille nongenti nonaginta novem*. This makes the French *mille neuf cent quatre-vingt-dix-neuf* (eight syllables) look comparatively economical; but our almost telegraphic "nineteen ninety-nine" (five syllables) is the clear winner for brevity.

I have always wondered why the French have had the patience to put up for so long with *quatre-vingt-dix-neuf* for 99 in everyday speech. The answer seems to be that it is a legacy from Caesar's conquest of Gaul.

Yours faithfully,
GEORGE ENGLE,
32 Wood Lane, Highgate, N6 5UB,
January 1.

From Mr Andrew Laurie

Sir, MDCCCCLXXXVIII or MIM? It comes as no surprise to read that Roman bureaucrats would have preferred to pepper their documents with long-windedness.

Museums around here are full of inscriptions made by those Romans who had better things to do (like defending the Empire) and so used abbreviations.

MIM will do fine for me.

Yours sincerely,
ANDREW LAURIE,
VII St Oswald's Road, Hexham,
Northumberland NE4 6LH.
andrew.laurie@virgin.net
January 1.

From Mr Norman Sanders

Sir, "We shall all know what we will celebrate in the year MM," you tell us. Most certainly. The number MM is a nice round soft landing — an easily recognised end to two millennia — whereas its successor, MMM, is an asymmetrical upstart, an appropriate intrusion signifying the start of another millennium.

The Roman system — which didn't contain a zero — offers indisputable evidence that the Government, the BBC, the Churches, the hoteliers and even *The Times* have got it wrong by a year.

There's hope yet that the Jubilee Line will be on time.

Yours faithfully,
NORMAN SANDERS,
Walnut Tree Cottage,
Tannington Park, Ipswich IP9 2NF.
norman.sanders@compuserve.com
January 1.

From Mr Neil Roberts

Sir, Your reporter seems to have his emperors confused.

There was no Emperor Flavius, although Flavius was the family name of a dynasty of emperors. Work on building the Colosseum in Rome (known as the Flavian Colosseum rather than Flavian's Colosseum) was started by Vespasian, the first Flavian Emperor, and completed by his son Titus, the second.

Yours,
NEIL ROBERTS,
18 Chesham Street,
Brighton, East Sussex BN2 1NA.
nrob@pavilion.co.uk

From Mrs Helga Harrison

Sir, Wouldn't even a dying Caesar have remembered the vocative and cried "Ei tu Brute", not "Ei tu Brutus" (as in your headline today)?

Yours truly,
HELGA HARRISON,
3 Westfield Lane, St Leonards-on-Sea,
East Sussex TN37 7NE,
January 1.

From Miss Nan Miller

Sir, That's odd. I thought the clock Ruperdely stood at X to 111. How could 1111 possibly rhyme with tea?

Yours sincerely,
NAN MILLER,
35 Love Lane,
Rochester, Kent ME1 1UD,
January 1.

Web site

From Mr H. G. Dyke

Sir, My spider adheres rigidly to the Highway Code (letter, December 26). Heff9 spins his web at traffic lights or junctions, returning to the corner of the wing-mirror when the car moves off, thus causing no distraction.

Yours faithfully,
HAROLD DYKE,
Avondale,
Alexander Place, Abercarnid,
Nr Merthyr Tydfil CF48 1SJ,
December 27.

Present and correct

From Mr Ian Rae

Sir, For once I got a rather good shirt and tie for Christmas, so I tried them on and showed my wife.

The verdict? "You look different when you're clean."

Yours dazingly,
IAN RAE,
The Doctor's House,
1257 Bristol Road South,
Northfield, Birmingham B31 2SW,
December 29.

ROLF LIEBERMANN

those who came to the house to join in chamber music evenings. The young Liebermann studied composition in Switzerland under Wladimir Vogel, while playing in a jazz band. He moved to Vienna in the mid-1930s with ambitions to become a conductor. There he worked with Hermann



After the end of the war Liebermann's career began to take its final shape, which was a split between composer and musical administrator. He took charge of music for the Swiss-German radio station in Zurich and became manager of the Beromün-

avant-garde. There was, too, some cacophony in *Concert des échanges*, commissioned by the city of Lausanne for its exhibition in 1964. Liebermann, inspired by the noises produced by the clattering typewriters and telexes in a busy office, scored it for 54 "industrial machines". Fortunately they did not

Rolf Liebermann was twice married. He is survived by his second wife, Helène Vida, a television journalist whom he met when she interviewed him, and by the son of his first marriage.

**HIS HONOUR
MICHAEL ARGYLE**

Educated at Shardlow Hall, Derbyshire, Westminster School and Trinity College, Cambridge, he served in the Second World War in India, the Middle East and Italy with the 7th Queen's Own Hussars. He won an immediate Military Cross for organising a



Some of his views were what one would expect from a former Conservative candidate, who stood unsuccessfully in Belper in 1950 and in Loughborough in 1955. He put into practice his belief that tougher sentencing could de-

PERSONAL COLUMN

STYLIANOU - Judith, wife of Andreas, mother of Christopher and daughter of Lt. General Sir Charles and Lady Dobell on 31st December at Paphos, Cyprus. Funeral at Anglican Church, Paphos on 5th January at 2.30 pm.

peacefully on New Year's Eve aged 89. Devoted wife of the late Ralph Winterton, much loved mother of Ann, Diana, William and Richard, grandmother of William, Edward, Polyanna, Alicia and Luke, great-grandmother of Oscar.

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consolidate in connection
with the late Gerald
Concoran.

IRON EYES CODY

and the heads of the IRA in the taken every step within their power last 24 hours to find Mr Kay about his immediate arrest and release. Wherever responsibility for the incident has aroused the greatest interest among the large body of journalists in Dublin and among at least a few members of Dail Eireann.



two men drew weapons of the
and, noticing that one of the
had a head in his pocket.

The outrage seems to have been the work of irresponsible persons opposed to the Treaty, and the heads of the IRA in the country have taken every step within their power during the last 24 hours to find Mr Kay and to bring about his immediate and unconditional release. Wherever responsibility lies, the incident has aroused the greatest indignation among the large body of journalists at present in Dublin and among at least a large section of members of Dail Éireann.

various occasions visited a shop in Upper Leeson-street, within a hundred yards of University College, to get what refreshment they could.

The leader, speaking swiftly and intensely to Mr Kay, said: "There is a car outside and you understand you have to come into it. If you don't, by Christ, we will riddle you." As he spoke he shook his pistol in Mr Kay's face. The rest of us were warned at the same time that if one tried to give the alarm we should be dealt with.

Mr Kay said that he was prepared to obey the orders given him, and was then told that if

[illegible]

THE TIMES

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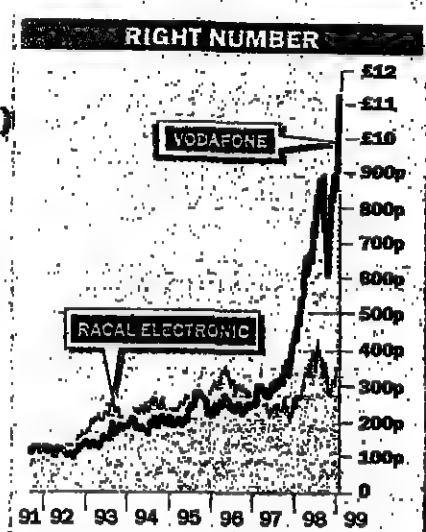
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BUSINESS EDITOR Patience Wheatcroft

WEDNESDAY JANUARY 6 1999

Britain's biggest mobile phone group seeks £60bn American merger Vodafone on line to AirTouch



BY CHRIS AVRES
VODAFONE, Britain's largest mobile phone group, has proposed a £60 billion-plus merger with AirTouch, its US rival. The talks were revealed yesterday, hours before AirTouch was set to finalise a similar deal with Bell Atlantic, the US fixed-line and mobile telephone company. It is thought that both Vodafone and Bell value AirTouch at about \$45 billion (£27 billion). Vodafone, which has nearly five million British customers, has long been rumoured to be interested in buying, or merging with, AirTouch, which is based in San Francisco. Both companies are focused mainly on mobile phone markets, and have complementary, rather than competitive, European operations. AirTouch has stakes in mobile phone companies in Germany, Portugal, Italy, Spain, Sweden and Belgium. Sources close to Vodafone said the company did not plan to sell off AirTouch's North

SHARES in Colt Telecom, the star performer on the London Stock Exchange, surged 8.8 per cent as speculation mounted that NTL, the Nasdaq-listed cable TV group, was about to launch a £7 billion bid. NTL, which recently agreed a £160 million deal to buy Newcastle United, declined to comment on the speculation. However, it admitted that it was interested in the possibilities thrown up by Colt's development of fibre optic cable networks around Europe's financial centres. Colt said it was not in takeover talks. Yesterday's share surge, coming on the back of a 500 per cent rise in 1998, values Colt at £6.1 billion. It has never made a profit and its turnover for 1998 is unlikely to exceed £220 million.

not yet been seriously discussed. Vodafone sources also emphasised that the deal would be "a merger of equals" and was likely to involve an American-style stock-for-stock transaction. The deal would create the world's first truly global mobile phone company, with Vodafone keeping its London listing. The two companies have about 22 million customers between them. Vodafone's brief statement to the Stock Exchange yesterday said: "Following recent press comment, Vodafone confirms that it

has made an approach to AirTouch regarding a possible merger. There can be no assurance that any agreement can or will be reached." Shares in Vodafone, which was demerged from Racal, the electronics group, in 1991, raced ahead 61½p yesterday to close at £11.10½p, leaving it valued at £34.3 billion. Although many analysts consider a merger between Vodafone and AirTouch to be a "dream deal", it could still fall apart if Bell makes a higher offer. But the Bell deal had already been stalled over fears that goodwill charges after a merger would hit profits. Yesterday's merger frenzy came only a day after figures showed that 2.5 million British consumers bought mobile phones in the three months running up to Christmas. Some analysts now estimate that 40 per cent of Britons will own a mobile phone by 2000, about double the proportion today.

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BUSINESS TODAY

STOCK MARKET INDICES		
FTSE 100	5958.2	(+78.8)
Yield	2.74%	
FTSE All Share	2704.08	(+30.91)
Nikkei	13232.74	(-183.15)
New York		
Dow Jones	9242.71	(+58.44)*
S&P Composite	1235.06	(+6.99)*
US RATE		
Federal Funds	4 1/4%	(5 1/4%)
Long bond	100 1/4%	(101 1/4%)
Yield	5.21%	(5.15%)
LONDON MONEY		
3-month interbank	6 1/4%	(6 1/4%)
Libor 3m	119.25	(119.64)
STERLING		
New York	1.6566*	(1.6580)
London	1.6555	(1.6581)
Frankfurt	1.4050	(1.4068)
Paris	2.2644	(2.2712)
Yen	164.78	(164.88)
£ index	98.7	(98.0)
DOLLAR		
London	1.1760*	(1.1827)
SP	1.2695*	(1.2665)
Yen	111.13*	(111.80)
£ index	103.2	(103.5)
Tokyo close Yen 111.49		
NORTH SEA OIL		
Brent 15-day (Mar)	\$10.89	(\$11.20)
EURO		
London close	\$286.69	(\$286.65)

* denotes midday trading prices

B&B pulls plug on pursuit of windfalls

By CAROLINE MENKEL

THE Bradford & Bingley, under siege yesterday from carping investors, is drawing up battle plans to fight off attempts to take the building society public. As word spread of plans to challenge Bradford & Bingley's mutual status, Britain's second-biggest building society announced that it had been forced to suspend the opening of new savings accounts. The decision was taken in the face of fears that it was set to be overwhelmed by speculative account openings from so-called carpetbaggers keen to benefit from any cash or

share windfall should the Bradford & Bingley float on the stock market. Conversion could bring windfalls of about £1,000 to the society's 2.5 million members. A flotation on the Stock Exchange would take it in on the cusp of immediate entry in the FTSE 100 index. At branches in the City yesterday the society was forced to shut its doors to potential investors at lunchtime as queues snaked out into the street. Stephen Major, a chartered surveyor currently working as a plumber, has put forward a motion to the society's annual meeting in April proposing that the board take steps to convert the society to a plc and distribute shares to members. Mr Major, from County Antrim, is also seeking election to the board. Lindsay Mackinlay and Christopher Rodrigues, the society's chairman and chief executive respectively, were confident yesterday that they would be able to defeat the resolution, pointing out that its stance as a mutual had helped it to grow over the past two and a half years from an asset size of £16 billion to £22 billion. Its branch network has more than doubled from 250 to 600 over the same period.

Mr Rodrigues said the society would have to spend about £5 million on making its 2.5 million members, and on taking advertisements in the press to explain the board's position. "We do not see the need to float. It would impair our competitive position. We would have to pay dividends to shareholders and more tax." Mr Mackinlay said that he hoped that the society would be able to re-open for savers after the AGM.

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Back to work: Gordon Brown, centre, with his new team at the Treasury. Clockwise from left: Barbara Roche, Financial Secretary; Patricia Hewitt, Economic Secretary; Dawn Primarolo, Paymaster General; Alan Milburn, Chief Secretary to the Treasury; and Lord Simon of Highbury, Trade and Competitiveness Minister

Soros ready to keep fund open

GEORGE SOROS, the international financier, has backedtracked on his decision to close the Quantum Emerging Growth Fund after finding suitable managers for the investment (Richard Miles writes). Edgar Astaire, of Edgar Astaire & Co, a leading London broker of shares in Soros funds, said Mr Soros had reversed a decision in October to wind up the \$1.5 billion (£906 million) fund which hedges against movements in emerging markets. Mr Astaire also confirmed that Nick Roditi, reportedly the UK's highest paid hedge manager, is returning after a three-month absence due to ill health to manage the \$1.7 billion Quota fund. It is closing to new investors in an attempt to limit its size.

Shares rise to highest level for five months

By JANET BUSH AND RICHARD MILES

LONDON shares jumped to their highest level for five months, fuelled by gains in telecoms and drugs issues, a firmer performance on Wall Street and hopes of more UK interest rate cuts. The FTSE 100 index of leading shares closed 78.3 points higher at 5958.2. Trading on European stock markets was far more subdued than during Monday's euro birthday rally as traders and investors turned cautious ahead of today when the first euro trades are settled. Paris shares closed up a further 1.28 per cent but Frankfurt's DAX index finished 0.5 per cent lower. After two days of fairly smooth trading in the euro, City institutions will today face the critical test of their computer system preparations when deals conducted earlier in the week are settled. The first transactions expected to be settled are spot trades in the euro, followed by transactions in other markets later this week and next. Bankers said the day's events would prove whether their conversion work over the weekend had been adequate. Last Friday David Clementi, Deputy Governor of the Bank of England, gave warning that London-based investment banks could face significant losses through computer glitches and human errors linked to the introduction of the euro. There have, however, been few problems reported to date. The euro was upstaged by a resurgent yen yesterday and slipped slightly against the

Japanese currency, the dollar and the pound. The yen hit its highest level against the dollar for 19 months. Hopes of a UK base rate cut tomorrow when the Monetary Policy Committee concludes its two-day meeting are not high. A Reuters poll of 26 economists found 19 expecting no change in rates this month but 20 predicting that rates will be cut in February. The Chancellor, who returned to work at the Treasury yesterday with his new ministerial team, faced a call from the Engineering Employers Federation to use the next Budget to help industry to maintain investment in skills and technology through the downturn.

The euro was upstaged by a resurgent yen yesterday and slipped slightly against the

Commentary, page 23

Bid fever grips car industry

By CHRISTINE BUCKLEY
INDUSTRIAL CORRESPONDENT

BID fever shook up European motor industry stocks yesterday on repeated rumours that Ford is attempting a three-way link with BMW and Honda and on speculation that Fiat, Volvo and Renault may join in the consolidation in the sector. With industry gossip going into overdrive during the Detroit Motor Show, shares of BMW jumped by more than 5 per cent in early trading before falling back later when both BMW and Honda denied the existence of talks. Ford refused to confirm or deny the speculation. BMW shares closed 1.2 per cent higher at \$69. Analysts believe that while the link of Ford, Honda and BMW would be the dream company as the industry is poised for consolidation, it could remain just a dream. Although a takeover by Ford has been touted, industry experts believe that merger agreements are more likely. Ford has a market valuation of \$72 billion (£44 billion) with about \$22 billion in cash while Honda is worth \$65 billion and BMW \$23 billion. Both potential target companies could be expected to attract bid premiums as they are regarded by many analysts as the best in their countries. With rumours of a tie-up with Nissan resurfacing, Renault shares closed up 1.46 per cent in Paris at \$42.50. Commentary, page 23

Travelex chiefs claim the last laugh

By RICHARD MILES

IF TIMING is the secret to good comedy, then the management of Travelex—one of the world's biggest operators of airport exchange bureaux—should have been rolling in the aisles yesterday. Less than 48 hours after the euro's birth and the disappearance of 11 mainland currencies, the directors of Travelex have taken control of their company by buying out the institutional investors, Abbey National and Investec, the South African banking group.

Undeterred by a projected two-thirds decline in demand for foreign exchange, Clive Kahn, finance director of Travelex, believes that the firm can continue to grow by mopping up any loose change business discarded by high street banks in the wake of the euro. Mr Kahn said: "The high street market for foreign exchange is expected to reduce by 65 per cent following the euro's introduction. Banks will turn their backs on the business as unprofitable.

while we have captured the main distribution points for the business—airports." Travelex has more than 300 exchange outlets across the globe, although less than 25 per cent of those are located in "euroland". It has already negotiated exclusive agreements to operate at Charles de Gaulle and at Orly, the two airports serving Paris. If the UK's biggest venture capitalist firm, backing the management buyout by indicating that it wanted to dispose of its third stake,

how much money it has pumped into Travelex in return for a 33 per cent stake. It said it would take a five to seven-year view on its investment in Travelex. Like most bureaux de change, Travelex operates on thin profit margins. It forecasts a turnover of £2.1 billion for 1999, with corresponding pre-tax profits of merely £7 million. Abbey National triggered the management buyout by indicating that it wanted to dispose of its third stake.

Gina Hunt, a 3i investment executive, said the company had spent a lot of time looking at the impact of the euro on Travelex's business before deciding to press ahead with its financing. "What Travelex have done is to target the key entry and exit points on the European continent. Their view, and our view, is that its distribution outlets and range of agreements put Travelex in a good position to be one of the key providers of foreign exchange," she said.

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Driving force behind mega-mergers

COMMENTARY
by our City Editor

Motor shows are expensive ways of creating a little excitement. Why else would they be draped with so many posing females, clad inconspicuously in swimsuits and feathers instead of sensible suits and driving shoes? And no wonder that such cabaret distracts from engine capacity and sends imaginations into overdrive.

That seems to have been happening in Detroit, from where the latest batch of motor industry merger stories is emanating. Yesterday's story had Ford in macho mood, sweeping up Honda and BMW. The details of the mechanism by which this would be accomplished were as scanty as the traditional motor show costumes, but the idea, despite being downplayed by those concerned, has dream appeal. The tripartite together would create a truly global business at a time when, in every industry, that much-banded label is becoming a reality.

It now seems inevitable that world markets will be dominated by a few big players in each sector. The polarisation in stock markets is already reflecting this view: emerging euroland's enthusiasm for the leading companies is leaving the smaller stocks looking sadly unmoved. Yet the first mega-merger of the year could be transatlantic rather than trans-European.

Vodafone would dearly love to join forces with AirTouch of the United States. Unfortunately,

Bell Atlantic has spotted the attractions of the US mobile phone operator and has started talking terms. Whatever Vodafone's ambitions, its chances of coming out on top in a bid battle against the mighty Bell seem slight.

But Vodafone has been getting to know AirTouch for months and may yet harbour hopes of being able to concoct a proposal that might appeal to the AirTouch board. Wooing US shareholders could be trickier, but there is a strong industrial logic in putting the two businesses together to form a base from which to persuade Americans that the mobile phone is an essential part of modern life.

It is the suspicion that this awakening is due, and the fact that technology is at last making mobile telephony a coast-to-coast reality in the US, that is inspiring Bell Atlantic's enthusiasm for AirTouch. But the deal would also bring Bell a strong presence in Europe. Vodafone's hopes that it might pick up AirTouch's European operations as a consolation prize could be ill-founded if Bell Atlantic is subscribing to the globalisation theory.

Investors have been backing telecoms stocks with all the fer-

vour that they pursued financial services companies and pharmaceuticals manufacturers. These have been some of the early beneficiaries of the globalisation trend. But other sectors have been slower to respond. More consolidation among motor companies, for instance, must lead to mergers among the component manufacturers. Euroland is but a staging post: the world is the commercial stage now.

Crisis, what crisis at the Treasury?

A new term has brought Gordon Brown a new team at the Treasury. After 19 months, a reshuffle, a promotion and two key resignations, the Chancellor has only one of his original five ministers in the same post. And he is the supernumerary Lord Simon of Highbury, who was almost invisible between the row over his ap-

pointment and being wheeled back into the daylight to greet the birth of his beloved euro.

That birth is also meant to create a euro-friendly atmosphere for publication of the Treasury's changeover plan, due within a month. No one in business need take it seriously unless the Chancellor does his bit. He must spell out when and under what circumstances he plans to hit sterling into the Mark 2 exchange-rate mechanism, the only responsible way to bring the UK economic cycle into convergence with euroland.

The rest of the agenda is anything but new. In only its second year, new Labour has managed to conjure up images last seen in the Winter of Discontent exactly 20 years ago, which finally consigned old Labour to the wilderness.

Then it was striking workers picketing hospitals and failing to bury the dead. In new Labour's Britain it is suffering children

left in corridors and a refrigerated trailer parked behind an East Anglian hospital, to store an overflow of corpses awaiting burial.

Even Tony Blair, returning from statesmanlike duties around his holiday in the Seychelles, uncannily invokes images of Jim Callaghan, whose complacent comments on his return from a Caribbean conference evoked the headline "Crisis, what crisis".

After two years, Mr Brown has budgeted lots more for health. It is clearly not enough. But dare his new team be anything but ultra-cautious when they draft a new Budget for March?

The Treasury's forecasts are for slower growth this year than anticipated in the spending review. Most other people's forecasts are even lower for 1999 and the millennium year. Lower rates of income tax look out of the question again, unless they are designed to increase taxation by cutting allowances.

One group, at least, may be

hopeful. Barbara Roche, who takes over the detailed tax role as Financial Secretary, made an unexpected hit in her previous role as Minister for Small Business. The benefits of tax help to small firms also seem to have made an impression on her. Now is the time to translate that into action.

Who would want the doctor of spin?

The deliberations of the Chancellor's new team are unlikely to be subject to the vigorous spinning of Charlie Whelan for very much longer. But can this mean that job offers have been piling in to help rid Mr Brown of his turbulent assistant? Mr Whelan has apparently made it clear that he has no wish to find a new job in the City. The feeling is almost certainly mutual. While Mr Whelan's way of doing business appeared to be condoned and even encouraged by the Chancellor, there would be few commercial organisations that would countenance his idiosyncratic methods.

While the news of his enforced departure from the Treasury has precipitated some affectionate

comments of the "cheeky chappy" genre, companies that treat their communications with the outside world as a vital part of their operations need professionals to do the job. Imagine Glaxo Wellcome, Merrill Lynch or Kingfisher allowing their relations with the press to hinge on a bar stool and a mobile phone.

When organisations are competing for business and investment, they know they need to put their message across strongly but to mislead the media is pointless: the figures will eventually tell the truth. Mr Whelan might have some difficulty in adapting his techniques to fit that world. Perhaps he is right to turn his attentions to prospects in the world of football. Perhaps Geoffrey Robinson could pull a few strings at Coventry.

Talk of windfalls

BRANCHES of the Bradford & Bingley Building Society were barring their doors against the onslaught of carpetbaggers yesterday. It was a fine sight to preface today's meeting of the Building Societies Association, intent on finding ways of preserving mutualisation. The delegates will be hard-pressed to find arguments to militate against the attractions of a windfall. They will have to take comfort in the fact that the queues outside the B&B demonstrated how financially aware the British public has become.

Abbot in merger talks with Norwegian rival

By CARL MORTSHED, INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS EDITOR

ABBOT GROUP, Britain's largest North Sea drilling company, is in merger talks with ProSafe, its Norwegian counterpart, aimed at creating a European oil services group.

Shares of Abbot Group jumped 9 per cent to 185p on news of the talks, which envisage a 50/50 merger of the two groups to create a £500 million company listed in London. ProSafe gained almost 60 per cent on the Oslo Stock Exchange on expectations that it would secure the better half of the bargain.

Michael Salter, chief operating officer of Abbot, said that cost-cutting was not the ration-

ale for merger. However, he indicated that the low oil price was a spur to consolidation and said that an Anglo-Norwegian alliance was needed to take on American drilling giants such as Schlumberger and Noble. He said: "They have tremendous clout. That is what we are trying to address."

Abbot sees the "state of mega-mergers in the oil sector as both problem and opportunity. Alasdair Locke, Abbot's chairman and 32 per cent shareholder, said: "The consolidation that is taking place within the major oil producing companies is likely to reduce the customer base of both Abbot and ProSafe."

The merged company hopes to expand beyond the North Sea by piggy-backing on customers, such as BP Amoco, as they move to lower cost areas in the Caspian and Middle East.

Abbot, which made half-year profits of £7 million on sales of £90 million, owns KCA Drilling, the largest drilling contractor in the North Sea, as well as a drilling mud business and industrial inspection business.

ProSafe is the world's largest owner of accommodation rigs as well as the leading drilling contractor on the Norwegian continental shelf. In the nine months to September, ProSafe made profits of about £20 mil-

lion on turnover of £150 million.

Mr Salter said there would be few synergies from combining the two drilling operations. However, he said the low oil price would push the oil companies into outsourcing more of their upstream activities. "Outsourcing became the rage in 1992 but the impetus dropped off when the oil price recovered. Now it will pick up again."

Mr Locke will become executive chairman of the merged company while Reidar Lund, chief executive of ProSafe, will become chief executive after completion of the deal.

Tempos, page 24

Euclidian forecasts sharp dip in return

Euclidian, the Lloyd's insurance company, is predicting a sharp fall in the underwriting return for the year just closed.

Underwriting returns for 1998, insurance for which has just closed, are estimated to be between 5 and 7.5 per cent. In the previous period, Euclidian made 13 per cent.

Sir Alexander Graham, the chairman, said that softness in the insurance market was likely to continue. "There is still little opportunity for most primary insurers to increase their underwriting rates," he said.

However, he pointed to some upward movements in re-insurance premiums. Euclidian was reporting pre-tax profits for the six months to September 30, of £1.7 million, up from £1.4 million. The dividend remains 2p, payable from earnings per share up to 5.03p, from 3.95p.

Tempos, page 24

Blow to Kvaerner's attack on its debts

Kvaerner's attempts to cut its £1.1 billion debt have suffered a setback with the collapse of a property sale.

The British-Norwegian engineer, which has promised to move a new structure in March, announced the disposal of its US housebuilding activities in October. The businesses were being sold to two buyers for about \$150 million (£90 million).

However, one buyer—a consortium that wanted to buy only a residential development in South Riding, Virginia—could not raise the necessary \$55 million and the estate has been put on the market again. Kvaerner had already booked a sale profit in its fourth-quarter results, which will be reversed. A spokesman said: "We are already talking to a number of potential purchasers." Fourth-quarter asset sales totalled \$290 million.

Factory jobs lost as liquidators act

About 240 factory workers lost their jobs yesterday as liquidators moved to wind up Telecom Manufacturing Limited (TML), a Lichfield-based company based in Airdrie, Lanarkshire.

Ian Rankin, a liquidator of PricewaterhouseCoopers, said that TML is owed £5 million by Telecom Sciences Limited (TSL), a company based in Manchester but also owned by the same parent, the Duell Foundation. Mr Rankin said: "I've been in the insolvency business for 20 years and this is one of the quaintest set-ups I've come across. Clearly there are a number of unanswered questions."

Nigeria cuts oil subsidy

By CARL MORTSHED, INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS EDITOR

NIGERIA has cut funding to its troubled oil industry by 20 per cent and promised a review of the funding of the joint ventures with foreign oil companies, including Shell, Elf, Mobil and Texaco.

The review could lead to a sell-off of a large stake in Nigeria's vast oil reserves, a move hitherto considered unacceptable for political reasons. Nigeria's Finance Minister, Ismaila Usman, said that auditors would be appointed to report on the joint ventures and the possibility of alternative funding. "The Government is concerned about its disproportionate participation in the operations of the joint ventures."

Foreign oil companies have been clamouring for privatisation of all or part of the average 57 per cent interest of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation. State funding for the oil joint ventures will fall from \$2.5 billion (£1.5 billion) last year to \$2 billion. However, NNPC is still some \$700 million in arrears on cash calls to the joint ventures and Western oil companies have given warning of dire consequences of failing output if Nigeria does not increase investment.

The collapse in the price of crude oil has badly eroded Nigeria's foreign currency earnings, further weakening its ability to invest. Oil revenues are expected to be just \$5.3 billion in the 1999 budget, down from last year's \$6.2 billion, which compares with an original budget of \$9.8 billion.

Battling to emerge, page 25



Michael Hurdle has been looking at a range of options to fend off W&DB's hostile bid

Pressure on Marston's

MARSTON, Thompson & Eversheds, the Pindar's bitter brewer, faces mounting pressure to pull a deal out of the hat to stand any chance of fighting off Wolverhampton & Dudley Breweries' hostile bid (Dominic Walsh writes).

Industry sources believe that Marston's, chaired by Michael Hurdle, has been looking at a range of options, from a management buyout to a merger with the rival brewers Morland and Mansfield, in an effort to provide a robust response to W&DB's £262 million bid.

Nigel Popham, drinks sector analyst at Teather & Greenwood, said: "Unless they come up with something extremely creative, Marston's days look numbered. The new management team has put in place an interesting strategy, but it is unproven. Investors are only interested in the next three months. My guess is that Wolves will sweeten its offer and that will be that."

Marston's is expected to elaborate on its plans in its formal defence document, which is due to be posted out to shareholders on Friday. Other possibilities are a break-up, a sale to a white knight or the so-called parman

option, whereby the prey launches a counter-bid for the predator.

The parman option is considered unlikely, while the chances of a white knight entering the fray have diminished since the obvious candidate, Greene King, joined forces with W&DB. The Abbot brewer has agreed to buy 170 of Marston's pubs for £80 million in the event that W&DB's bid succeeds.

W&DB yesterday extended its offer until January 29 after receiving acceptance in respect of just 0.89 per cent of Marston's shares by Monday's second closing date.

Granada £80m hotel parcel for sale

By DOMINIC WALSH

GRANADA, the media and hospitality group, has quietly put a "for sale" sign over a package of 23 Heritage and Posthouse hotels with a combined price tag of about £80 million.

The properties, totalling almost 2,000 bedrooms, are being sold as part of the continuing tidying up of the hotel portfolio acquired with the takeover of Forte three years ago.

It is understood that the hotels are being marketed in two packages by Christie & Co, the property agent.

However, analysts believe that, as with previous asset disposals, Granada will eventually be forced to sell the properties off in ones and twos.

The 15-Posthouses in question are largely older properties that do not fit the new Posthouse blueprint launched in September 1997 and backed up by a £60 million investment programme. The biggest are in Manchester, Sheffield, Runcorn and Erskine, near Glasgow.

The move puts a further question mark over the future of the 50-strong Heritage chain within the Forte portfolio, which is increasingly focused on the Meridien, Posthouse and Travelodge brands. One of the best-known is the 33-room White Horse at Romsey, Hampshire, parts of which date back to Elizabethan times.

Granada admitted that it was selling a number of Heritage hotels, but dismissed suggestions that the brand might disappear. It said that the disposals were simply part of the "normal churn", whereby lesser units are sold and better properties acquired. The group also claimed that the 15 Posthouses were merely "under re-

view" and that no decision had yet been taken on whether they would actually be sold.

Meanwhile, talks over three London four-star hotels that were put up for sale a year ago continue to drag on after the collapse of a deal with Highgate Holdings, the US property group. Granada is now in talks to sell the 325-room Russell to Principal Hotels for about £60 million, while Chelmsfield is circling the 86-room Saint-Georges, which is worth about £12 million. The 255-room Cavendish is also up for offers.

Court computer system's '£60m waste' criticised

By JASON NISSE

THE Lord Chancellor's Department was yesterday accused of wasting up to £60 million of public money on a computer system for the magistrates' courts of England and Wales.

The Private Finance Initiative deal, worth £183 million over ten years, was awarded to a consortium led by ICL, the systems services group, and Unisys, the US computer giant, yesterday after a year-long bid battle.

However, a rival consortium led by EDS, of Texas, said that it had offered to supply a similar system for less than

£120 million. The EDS team had withdrawn its bid last autumn after learning that it had been designated a category "A" risk factor by the Lord Chancellor's Department, indicating that the department did not believe that EDS could deliver its system on time.

The ICL consortium has, however, offered to deliver the system, called Libra, in exactly the same timeframe. This requires Libra to be operational by the end of 2001, allowing information about trials, charges and convictions to be delivered online to magistrates' courts and outside users.

EDS has complained to the department about how the bidding was conducted and has also questioned why Richard Stock, chairman of the user committee representing the courts, resigned at a crucial point in the bidding process. Alan Gibson, ICL executive director, said that he could not comment on why EDS had withdrawn from the bidding, but that, in the end, ICL was on a shortlist of one.

The Lord Chancellor's Department was unable to comment on the bid process, but has said in the past that it was EDS's choice to withdraw.

Lambeth Building Society

Please note that, with effect from 6th January 1999, the following interest rates will apply.

OPEN ACCOUNT TYPES		PREVIOUS GROSS AER	GROSS AER (1)	GROSS (2)	NET
MILLENNIUM (New acc)			6.00%	6.00%	4.80%
10 days notice after 25 days			6.25%	6.25%	5.00%
			6.40%	6.40%	5.12%
			6.75%	6.75%	5.40%
PRE-SAVE FEEDER (New acc)					
30 days notice after 25 days		£3,000 up to £12,000	7.20%	7.20%	5.76%
TESSA FAREWELL					
TESSA CHOICE		60 DAYS' NOTICE - min £2,500	7.00%	6.50%	5.50%
OLYMPIOS SHARES		min £1,000 up to £5,000	1.75%	1.25%	1.00%
		£5,000 up to £10,000	4.00%	3.40%	2.72%
		£10,000 up to £20,000	4.50%	3.90%	3.04%
		£20,000 up to £50,000	5.00%	4.40%	3.36%
		£50,000 up to £200,000	5.50%	4.90%	3.68%
REGENT/REGAL		£500 up to £2,500	2.15%	1.55%	1.24%
		£2,500 up to £5,000	2.85%	2.25%	1.80%
		£5,000 up to £10,000	3.15%	2.55%	1.92%
		£10,000 up to £30,000	4.50%	3.90%	3.12%
		£30,000 up to £150,000	4.85%	4.25%	3.44%
BOUNTY SHARES		£500 up to £2,500	2.95%	2.35%	1.87%
		£2,500 up to £5,000	3.55%	2.95%	2.36%
		£5,000 up to £10,000	4.20%	3.60%	2.88%
		£10,000 up to £30,000	4.95%	4.35%	3.44%
		£30,000 up to £50,000	5.45%	4.85%	3.88%
		£50,000 up to £200,000	6.20%	5.60%	4.42%
FOLLOW-UP TESSA		up to £3,000 - LBS TESSA mortgages only	7.25%	6.75%	5.75%
ISSUES CLOSED FOR NEW ACCOUNTS					
ORDINARY					
		£500 up to £2,500	1.05%	0.80%	0.64%
		£2,500 up to £10,000	1.35%	0.85%	0.68%
		£10,000 up to £30,000	1.65%	1.15%	0.92%
		£30,000 up to £150,000	1.85%	1.35%	1.08%
REGULAR		up to £150,000	1.05%	0.80%	0.64%
SEVEN DAY					
		£500 up to £2,500	1.10%	1.00%	0.80%
		£2,500 up to £10,000	1.45%	1.05%	0.84%
		£10,000 up to £30,000	1.85%	1.25%	1.00%
		£30,000 up to £150,000	2.35%	1.75%	1.36%
60 DAY (formerly 2 year)					
		£500 up to £2,500	2.10%	1.50%	1.20%
		£2,500 up to £10,000	3.00%	2.40%	1.92%
		£10,000 up to £30,000	3.70%	3.10%	2.48%
		£30,000 up to £50,000	4.80%	4.20%	3.36%
		£50,000 up to £200,000	5.45%	4.85%	3.88%
PREMIUM					
		£500 up to £2,500	2.25%	1.65%	1.31%
		£2,500 up to £10,000	3.10%	2.50%	1.96%
		£10,000 up to £30,000	3.85%	3.25%	2.58%
		£30,000 up to £50,000	4.60%	4.00%	3.16%
		£50,000 up to £200,000	5.35%	4.75%	3.72%
HIGH YIELD					
		£500 up to £2,500	2.25%	1.65%	1.31%
		£2,500 up to £10,000	2.85%	2.25%	1.80%
		£10,000 up to £30,000	3.35%	2.75%	2.16%
		£30,000 up to £50,000	3.65%	3.05%	2.40%
		£50,000 up to £200,000	4.35%	3.75%	2.96%
MAGNUM					
		£500 up to £2,500	2.65%	2.05%	1.63%
		£2,500 up to £10,000	2.95%	2.35%	1.87%
		£10,000 up to £30,000	3.35%	2.75%	2.16%
		£30,000 up to £50,000	3.65%	3.05%	2.40%
		£50,000 up to £200,000	4.35%	3.75%	2.96%
TROPHY					
		£500 up to £2,500	3.00%	2.40%	1.91%
		£2,500 up to £10,000	3.35%	2.75%	2.16%
		£10,000 up to £30,000	3.65%	3.05%	2.40%
		£30,000 up to £50,000	4.20%	3.60%	2.88%
		£50,000 up to £200,000	5.05%	4.45%	3.56%
ONE YEAR SHARES					
		£1,000 up to £2,500	4.70%	4.10%	3.28%
		£2,500 up to £10,000	6.40%	5.80%	4.64%
		£10,000 up to £30,000	6.85%	6.25%	5.00%
		£30,000 up to £50,000	6.85%	6.25%	5.00%
		£50,000 up to £200,000	7.05%	6.45%	5.16%
TESSA ELITE		60 DAYS' NOTICE	6.25%	5.75%	4.75%
MATURED TESSAS					
		Balance under £1,000	2.10%	1.50%	1.20%
		Selected 90 days £1,000 and over	6.25%	5.75%	4.75%
		£1,000 and over	6.25%	5.75%	4.75%
		Chosen 90 days £1,000 and over	7.05%	6.45%	5.20%
BOUNTY DEPOSITS					
		Balance under £500	0.40%	0.40%	0.40%
		£500 up to £2,500	2.90%	2.35%	1.88%
		£2,500 up to £5,000	3.15%	2.75%	2.20%
		£5,000 up to £10,000	4.20%	3.80%	2.88%
		£10,000 up to £30,000	4.95%	4.35%	3.44%
		£30,000 up to £50,000	5.45%	4.85%	3.88%
		£50,000 up to £200,000	6.20%	5.60%	4.42%
Accounts below £500, except as shown above			1.00%	0.75%	0.60%

25 Annual Equivalent Rate (AER) shown above

Drug companies inject pace into new year trade

THIS could be a bumper year for drug companies. Glaxo Wellcome extended its record-breaking run yesterday with a leap of 104p to a high of £22.33 as 8.5 million shares, worth about £189 million, changed hands.

Glaxo, along with other drug companies, has benefited from new year share tips and there has even been talk that Britain's biggest drug company may be poised to make a spoiling bid for rival Zeneca, up 80p to £27.74, already the subject of an agreed merger with Sweden's Astra.

Also making headway was SmithKline Beecham, 33p dearer at 88p, on the back of a "buy" recommendation from Dresdner Kleinwort Benson.

Other leading shares were much in demand, especially those linked with possible corporate activity such as Baxendale, up 54p to £13.42, and GEC, 22p stronger at 55p, where the company has set a target price of 600p.

Strong performances by the drug and telecom sectors paved the way for a positive performance by the rest of the equity market. But despite further strong gains for the Dow Jones industrial average in early trading, prices in London closed below their best levels.

The FTSE 100 index finished 78.8 points up at 5,958.2 having briefly touched 5,980.5. The gains were less spectacular among the second-liners and that was reflected in the FTSE 250 index, up 19.2 to 4,870.2. Total turnover reached 962 million shares.

Retailers claiming they have done well over the Christmas period are a rare commodity these days. However, Sainsbury's, it seems, is the genuine article. It says sales were good, despite a slow start that was offset by a strong finish.

In November, Sainsbury's, down 10p to 268p, reported sales in the first five weeks of the second half up 5 per cent. Peter Jones, at Peel Hunt, the broker, expects that sort of growth to be maintained.

By contrast, Asda, down 54p to 158p, may have found the going difficult. Pannum Gordon, the broker, remains worried about the benefits of promotional activity and has reiterated its "sell" recommendation for the shares.

Yesterday's profits warning from the German software giant SAP sent a shudder



David Webster, the chairman, and Colin Smith, the chief executive, right, saw shares of Sainsbury fall 104p to 268p

through British software specialists. Losses were seen in Ecom Group, 45p to £20.55, MMT Computing, 35p to 892p, London Bridge Software, 47p to £12.40, MBS International, 34p to 280p and CMG, 23p to £15.77. Moving against the trend, MSW Technology stood out with a rise of 15p at 135p.

Arcadia continued to hit

new depths with a fall of 5p to 164p. Earlier this week Credit Suisse First Boston, the broker, undermined the Top Shop and Burton retailer, with a profits downgrade. Yesterday it was joined by ABN Amro Hoare Govett, which is reckoned to have reduced its profit numbers by 20 per cent.

HSBC Securities, the broker, has raised its recommenda-

tion for Cobham, 33p higher at 713p. It has moved from "hold" to "buy" and rates the defence and civil aerospace group as "an attractive proposition for 1999".

Diploma was one of the worst-performing stocks, falling 41p to 122p after it gave warning that profits for the current year will be lower than last time round. It blamed declining trading conditions.

It seems we stuffed ourselves with record amounts of seasonal fare over the Christmas holiday. Cranwell, up 3p to 285p, says it sold four million chipolatas, cocktail and ordinary sausages in the weeks leading up to Christmas. Most of it was sold through J Sainsbury, Asda and William Morrisons.

Syber Group needed 3p to 179p with sources close to the company saying the company has not received any bid approaches. The motor distributor has been the subject of intense bid speculation that has lifted it from a low of 123p.

Traders reported some heavy turnover in Fortrose Oil, up 4p to 34p, as more than ten million shares changed hands. This followed the put-through of at least two large lots of stock, including one of four million at 24p and 2.5 million at 28p.

Servotek touched 147p before ending 14p higher at 127p on talk of a bid from City Technology, 3p better at 23p.

Over on AIM, Honeycombe Leisure reached a new high of 74p, a rise of 5p. Earlier this week, James Baer, director, bought 5,000 shares at 70p, taking his total holding to 62,000, or 2.8 per cent.

GILT-EDGED: The bond market has a neglected place as investors sought other places to invest money. Prices drifted across the yield curve as money was ploughed into both the credit and swaps market.

In the futures pit, the March series of the long gilt retreated 3p to £19.25 as more than 23,000 contracts were completed. Cash issues saw Treasury 9 per cent 2021 drop 20p to £151.60, while among shorter-dated stocks, Treasury 7 per cent 2002 was 13p easier at £107.50.

NEW YORK: US shares moved higher in generally cautious early trading. At midday the Dow Jones industrial average was up 58.44 points to 9,242.71.

New York (midday):
Dow Jones 9,242.71 (+58.44)
S&P Composite 1,235.06 (+4.96)

Tokyo: 13,222.74 (+103.15)
Nikkei Average 1,881.06 (+41.85)

Amsterdam: 356.51 (+7.50)
AEX Index 1,117.77 (+17.70)

Sydney: 2,815.5 (-17.0)

Frankfurt: 3,253.91 (+1.55)
DAX 1,117.77 (+17.70)

Singapore: 1,386.24 (+13.87)
SSE 1,117.77 (+17.70)

Brussels: 3,253.91 (+1.55)
Euronext 1,117.77 (+17.70)

Paris: 3,253.91 (+1.55)
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Walking on AirTouch

WITH a 14 per cent rise behind Vodafone this week (and since this column included it as a new year tip) it is tempting now to take profits. Starting the week at 97p, Vodafone was trading at 55 times forecast earnings per share for the year to next March. Now at £11.04, the shares trade on a multiple of 63 times. At such levels it may not take much — say a scare that mobiles do heighten cancer risks in users — to knock the cards over.

The sharp rise of Vodafone this year is easily explained. The excellent connection numbers published on Tuesday coupled with excitement yesterday about a possible merger with AirTouch, a \$45 billion rival based in San Francisco. However, both bits of good news have downgraded the market has chosen to ignore. The vast majority of Vodafone's new customers are on "pre-pay" deals, and in revenue

terms these are neither as lucrative nor as reliable as the more established annual subscription contracts. Swallowing AirTouch, meanwhile, could cause serious indigestion.

But the bull argument still holds sway. Any new customers are better than no customers and once introduced to the convenience of mobile telephony, there is every chance some could become more remunerative. With regard to its overseas expansion ideas, Vodafone is blessed with foreign experience. It also has a cautious alternative approach: nab AirTouch for its European exposure and sell off the American side.

There are precious few industries that have as clearly visible growth potential as this one. In Vodafone you also have a telecom company that is profitable. The rating makes little sense, but keep the faith for now.

Abbot

ABBOT is heading down the right road in looking to merge with ProSafe of Norway, but it may be paying a high toll for the privilege.

Britain's North Sea oil services industry is at an important juncture. Exploration is being drastically curbed on Europe's continental shelf. With the oil price stubbornly low and the cost of finding and piping oil from the North Sea at \$12 a barrel, there is no margin in it. Unsurprisingly, the oil majors are seeking cheaper oil in the Gulf of Mexico and West Africa.

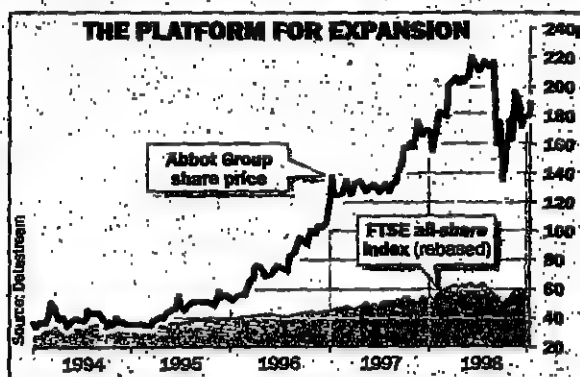
Companies such as Abbot are doing fine working existing fields but if the exploration hiatus continues their order books will decline. Abbot is correct to draw the conclusion that it cannot afford to remain a parochial service group swimming in just one

pond. The solution is to find work in more popular fields, but it will increasingly confront the financial clout and expertise of America's oil service giants.

The likes of BP Amoco and Exxon Mobil will be difficult and demanding customers. The merger with ProSafe increases Abbot's resources and puts more goods in its

shop window. However, its apparent reluctance to seek management savings by combining the two drilling operations looks dubious.

It could be strategy to smooth the merger path but Abbot needs to drive a harder bargain with its new partner. The paupered Norwegian services industry cannot sit in splendid isolation for long.



Amey

AMEY has done well transforming itself. From being a tired old civil engineering company — perennially at the mercy of construction cycle ups and downs — it has now moved into the much brighter business of building and maintaining buildings, roads and other infrastructure. It has also tapped into the current trend for outsourcing.

Cynics say that outsourcing turns a one-off capital expense into a medium-term revenue expense, flattening the look of the balance sheet in the process. This is true but businesses also like to outsource because it enables them to focus on their knitting. It is like employing an accountant to fill out your tax return: in terms of time spent you may be able to earn far more than it costs to hire the bean counter.

Yesterday Amey signed a deal that is exactly like that. It will be paid £65 million over

three years to run Centrica's business support services. Amey is promising Centrica that it can save the gas company money and still make a nice profit itself.

There is much more of this business to go for and unlike some of the information technology companies that are also into outsourcing, Amey will not face a fall in demand once the millennium bug has been sorted out.

Its shares rose 44 per cent last year and there is every reason to believe the surge will continue. Buy.

Euclidian

NEWS yesterday from Euclidian makes worrying reading because it confirms that underwriting conditions in the Lloyd's insurance market are getting more difficult.

There is no unpleasant shock in Euclidian's interim results of the sort that spoilt the Cox party before Christmas, but in many ways it is more serious. Profits from un-

derwriting, according to Euclidian, will be between 5 and 7.5 per cent this year, down from 13 per cent.

In turn the worsening underwriting position could undermine Euclidian and other integrated Lloyd's vehicles. The shares are sensibly valued by adding the net asset value to a multiple of underwriting earnings. This multiple will be low, because of the almost inevitable irregularity of that income. Euclidian's net assets — the assets used to back insurance risks — are 116p a share. Underwriting earnings per share are about 20p a share. But the Euclidian stock share fell yesterday from 121p to 119p.

Insurance companies always look like investment trusts with a potentially expensive hobby — insurance underwriting. But valued on this basis Euclidian shares are cheap, so long as it makes an underwriting profit. Buy.

EDITED BY ROBERT COLE

LIFE				ICS-LOR (London 5.00pm)				ON LONDON GRAIN FUTURES			
COCOA				CRUDE OILS (Brented FOB)				LIFE WHEAT			
May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Spot Physical	May	Jun	Jul	Volume 275	May	Jun	Jul
May	329.00	329.00	329.00	May 13 day (May)	10.35	-0.20	-0.20	Jan	76.40	Jan	76.25
Jun	329.00	329.00	329.00	June 13 day (May)	10.70	-0.10	-0.10	Feb	76.40	Feb	76.25
Jul	329.00	329.00	329.00	W Texas Intermediate (Oct)	10.85	-0.25	-0.25	Mar	76.40	Mar	76.25
Aug	329.00	329.00	329.00	W Texas Intermediate (Nov)	12.10	-0.25	-0.25	Apr	76.40	Apr	76.25
Vol: 1015-1012	Vol: 1015-1012	Vol: 1015-1012	Vol: 1015-1012	W Texas Intermediate (Dec)	12.50	-0.25	-0.25	May	76.40	May	76.25
								Jun	76.40	Jun	76.25
								Jul	76.40	Jul	76.25
								Aug	76.40	Aug	76.25
								Vol: 284.0	Vol: 284.0	Vol: 284.0	Vol: 284.0
ROBUSTA COFFEE				PRODUCTS (SMT)				LIFE POTATO B/B			
May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Spot CIF NW Europe (prompt delivery)	May	Jun	Jul	Open	Close	Settle	Open
May	1015-1012	1015-1012	1015-1012	Premium Unid	112 (+1)	116 (+1)	+1	May	25.00	25.00	25.00
Jun	1015-1012	1015-1012	1015-1012	3rd Ed Feb	58 (-1)	60 (-1)	-1	Jun	25.00	25.00	25.00
Jul	1015-1012	1015-1012	1015-1012	Naphtin	108 (+3)	108 (+3)	+3	Jul	25.00	25.00	25.00
Aug	1015-1012	1015-1012	1015-1012					Aug	25.00	25.00	25.00
								Vol: 123	Vol: 123	Vol: 123	Vol: 123
WHITE SUGAR (POW)				ICE FUTURES (NEW LK)				RUBBER (Type 1 RSS C-47 60)			
May	Jun	Jul	Aug	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
May	245-245.8	245-245.8	245-245.8	Feb	50.25-50.25	May	104.00-64.50	May	46.50-47.00	Jun	46.50-47.00
Jun	254-03.7	254-03.7	254-03.7	Feb	102.25-51.00	May	105.75-62.25	Jul	46.50-47.00	Aug	46.50-47.00
Jul	254-03.7	254-03.7	254-03.7	May	102.25-51.00	May	105.75-62.25	Vol: 2593.0			
Aug	254-03.7	254-03.7	254-03.7								
Vol: 254-03.7	Vol: 254-03.7	Vol: 254-03.7	Vol: 254-03.7								
MEAT & LIVESTOCK COMMISSION				LIFE BIFFEX (Cont Ltd Strip)				LIFE BIFFEX (Cont Ltd Strip)			
May	Jun	Jul	Aug	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
May	46.85	46.85	46.85	Feb	10.05-10.05	May	11.22-51.00	May	81.0	81.0	81.0
Jun	46.85	46.85	46.85	May	10.05-10.05	May	11.22-51.00	Jun	81.0	81.0	81.0
Jul	46.85	46.85	46.85	Aug	10.05-10.05	May	11.22-51.00	Jul	81.0	81.0	81.0
Aug	46.85	46.85	46.85					Aug	81.0	81.0	81.0
Vol: 46.85	Vol: 46.85	Vol: 46.85	Vol: 46.85					Vol: 249 lot	Vol: 249 lot	Vol: 249 lot	Vol: 249 lot
				</							

Back to the Sixties but not swinging yet

Economic commentators are beginning to talk in quite dramatic terms about inflation and therefore interest rates. For many, Britain is well along a path that leads back to the low and stable inflation of the 1960s. Britain may not quite reach European interest rates of 3 per cent but could get pretty close — and that is whether the UK decides to join the single currency or not.

Michael Saunders, of Salomon Smith Barney, puts a pretty compelling case for headline inflation to drop to close to zero this year to its lowest level since 1960. Underlying inflation, he believes, will fall to about 1.5 per cent late this year so long as oil prices do not recover. This would be the lowest underlying rate since 1967. This, he argues, means that base rates will fall to 5 per cent in the middle of this year and below 5 per cent in late 1999 or early 2000.

If British businesses and wage bargainers begin to believe that low inflation is a permanent or semi-permanent feature of the landscape, base rates could fall to

4 per cent early in the new millennium. His forecasts do not rely on any assumption that monetary policy will be geared to providing sterling with a smooth glide path down to the euro some time after the next election but purely on a reading of economic trends. The main forces working in favour of low inflation include a sharp economic slowdown already under way that has left business with large piles of unsold stock and therefore presages deep discounting, as well as very weak commodity prices.

It might be added that the global growth outlook may look much worse than it does now if the American economy turns turtle. A new report by Bill Martin, of Phillips & Drew, and Professor Wynne Godley, of Cambridge University, argues that, in order to continue growing steadily, private spending would have to exceed income by the

equivalent of more than 8 per cent of gross domestic product, double the level of last year and considerably larger than the 6 per cent reached in the Lawson boom which led to damaging bust. Debt would escalate to 2.4 times US annual income. Wall Street would have to inflate even further and the current account deficit would double. All of this is clearly unsustainable and the moment that America stops being the world's spender of last resort could be a devastating one.

The authors write: "Looking through the looking glass at America's wonderland, we conclude that should the stock market stop, it would instead fall over. A spiral, once virtuous, would become exceedingly vicious, bringing down the entire house of cards. We cannot time this pattern of events but we are convinced of its inevitability." The cumulative cost to the



world economy by 2003 in terms of lost growth could be in the order of 5 per cent of global GDP.

This study believes that Britain and Europe would be least badly affected by such events but, nevertheless, in an era of evidently low inflation, it does provide a strong incentive for central bankers to err on the side of growth. In the minutes of the December MPC meeting, it became evident in a long passage on the subject

that the committee has begun to discuss a so-called neutral interest rate designed neither to stimulate nor restrain the economy.

Opinion was clearly divided (not least on whether the neutral rate is a useful concept for policymaking) on where the neutral rate lies. Unhelpfully for those of us trying to predict where base rates will end up, the variety of MPC opinion put the neutral rate at anywhere between 4.5 per cent and 6.5 per cent.

However, there is a camp on the MPC that believes not only that the neutral rate is significantly below the 6.75 per cent base rate that prevailed before December's half-point cut but also that base rates should currently be set below that neutral rate.

David Mackie, of JP Morgan, who has, beyond the call of duty, looked at the evidence of the past 170 years, concludes that a neutral

rate for Britain would be about 4.5 per cent. All of this suggests that there is scope for UK base rates to fall to levels not seen for a generation. It does not, however, make a cast iron case for a cut tomorrow.

Among the arguments for waiting a month are uncertainty about how the January sales have gone; some evidence that the recent decline in sterling is arresting the drop in exports; a concern not to be the odd man out in cutting rates when the Fed and the European Central Bank are on hold and nervousness about another cut undermining sterling in the potentially volatile first weeks of trading in the euro. When in doubt, the MPC has sometimes waited to go through the full analytical process involved in publishing its quarterly *Inflation Report* before coming to a decision on rates — and the next report is in February.

However, there are also arguments for moving now. If there is general agreement on the MPC that rates have not bottomed, what is the sense of waiting, particularly as even Eddie George appears to have bought into the Goodhart/Butler school of activism. Inflation is low and falling and the MPC has made it clear that it will be as assiduous in avoiding an undershoot of the inflation target as an overshoot. In addition, since its last *Inflation Report*, independent forecasts for both growth and inflation have been scaled back.

Whatever the outcome this week, it is evident that the MPC is not blind to the possibility of inflation and interest rates at 1960s levels and that the influx of academic outsiders has brought new dimensions, a more active consideration of different economic concepts and varied instinctual approaches to the process of rate setting. This intellectual flux is fascinating but, together with a dramatic change in global economic trends from the 1970s and 1980s, it makes monthly rate decisions far harder to call.

Oil-rich Nigeria battles to emerge from its crumbling economy

Brian Wilson explains why Britain must encourage democracy in 'new' country

The enigma of Nigeria is summed up in the queues, hundreds of yards long, for petrol at every filling station in Lagos and Abuja. Here is a country, easily capable of producing two million barrels of oil a day, which cannot supply its own people with enough fuel to keep their cars running. There are plenty of explanations. The oil refineries are clapped out and desperately in need of investment. Civil strife in the Delta area is significantly undermining oil production. But more fundamentally, this is a rich country that has been robbed and mismanaged for so long that the cupboard is finally just about bare.

So why lead a trade mission now, when perceptions of Nigeria as an economic basket case remain strong? The answer lies in the fact that political change is in the process of happening. As yet the outcome is uncertain. But there is a real, unmistakable determination to make it work and if that can be achieved, then economic transformation might not be far behind.

We should know within months whether the transition to democratic government has been successful. In February, there will be elections both for a national assembly and to choose a president. You can never be certain in Nigeria, but the indications are that the new administration will be in place by May.

The transitional Government is led by General Abubakar who has no intention of standing for the presidency — a useful starting point in any such process. Abubakar has assembled an impressive team of ministers who are at pains to make it clear that they are on very short-term contracts. Their job is to hand over to a stable society and to secure an economy as possible to their elected successors.

These objectives mean that merely marking time until May is not an option. The appalling regime of General

Abacha, both brutal and spectacularly corrupt, ended last June with the death of its leader. He left behind a crumbling economy and widespread civil strife in the neglected areas from where the oil wealth flows. Britain distanced itself from Nigeria after the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa, which also led to Nigeria's suspension from the Commonwealth. Abubakar's commitment to human rights and to hand-over quickly to a civilian government has opened the door to improved diplomatic and commercial relations. My own visit was a direct follow-through from the successful encounter between Abubakar and Tony Blair in London last September.

There is no doubt that Nigeria wants to strengthen economic links with Britain (although even now it is an export market worth some £400 million per year). There is a very direct correlation in the minds of many senior figures — often British educated — between happier days for the country and the residue of British influence.

This was perhaps at its strongest when we met Alhaji Alfa Wali, the impressive Agriculture Minister, and his team. They need investment both to modernise small farming, which sustains more than three quarters of the population, and also to develop much larger units of commercial production. They attribute halcyon days in the not-so-distant past, when Nigeria was a net exporter of food, to the legacy of British agriculturalists and the 18 research institutes they left behind. All of them are now defunct.

In this, and other key sectors of the economy, there is plenty of interest among British companies, both in trading with and investing in the new Nigeria. But there are many obstacles of both substance and perception to be overcome.

Ministers in the transitional Government know that there are hard decisions that need to be taken quickly if interest and



Tony Blair welcomes General Abubakar to Downing Street during his visit last September

goodwill are to be capitalised upon. And they have shown themselves willing to grasp the nettle. When I met Alhaji Usman, the Minister of Finance, he gave a clear undertaking that the dual exchange rate — a blatant scam that offers a huge competitive advantage to those who are in a position to exploit naira-dollar conversion — would be abolished. Now that has happened. This was an act of courage as

it threatened the vested interests of powerful individuals. On the other hand, many issues still need to be addressed. There is the uncomfortable fact that Transparency International, the research group, has consistently placed Nigeria at the bottom of its Corruption Perceptions Index. It would go a long way towards encouraging investor confidence if the Nigerian Government was seen to take a definite stance to pro-

mote transparency and discourage corruption.

The UK's Export Credit Guarantee Department has had its fingers burnt, over the past 20 years it has extended more than £3 billion, and there must be some indication of how inroads will be made into that debt. But the Nigerians are well aware of these difficulties and appear determined to address them quickly — not least in order to get

some of the toughest decisions out of the way before the elected government takes over.

Another of these hard decisions is whether to press ahead with a privatisation programme in advance of the presidential elections. This is the signal that many foreign investors are waiting for and transitional ministers insist that it will happen. It is less an ideological matter than a necessary prerequisite to securing investment that Nigeria's utilities and infrastructure so desperately need. Oil refineries, power supply and telecommunications could soon be open to offers.

Perhaps the most menacing of all Nigeria's problems is the lawlessness that has grown up as a reaction to the previous Governments' failure to commit an equitable proportion of the oil revenues to the communities who live where the stuff is produced. The oil companies are looking to the Government to maintain the rule of law. But it is unlikely that this will have any long-term effect unless there is clear evidence that the commitment, to spend 13 per cent of oil revenues in the production areas, is fulfilled.

On top of all the other problems that they face, the transitional Government is trying to put together a budget that is based on an oil price of \$10 per barrel. That certainly means, even on the most favourable prognosis, that there is going to be no early return to the prosperity of the 1970s for the Nigerian economy as a whole.

Yet there are plenty of British companies that have continued to trade successfully and profitably. The sheer vastness of the market, more than 100 million people, allied to the clear potential for economic success if only the political horror stories can be avoided, mean that Nigeria is a country that cannot be ignored.

The next few months are likely to tell us a lot about whether a democratic future really does exist and, if so, what it amounts to. It is a process we must encourage.

□ The author is the Minister for Trade. He led a delegation, including representatives from Shell, SmithKline Beecham and Standard Chartered, to Nigeria in December.

BUSINESS LETTERS

Pound is being made a scapegoat for the misfortunes of pig-farmer

From Mr Gerry Hanson

Sir, it really won't do for Fraser Nelson to blame the misfortunes of pig-farmer Donald Ross on the so-called strength of the pound. (The euro and me, December 24). The market price of pigs has nothing to do with the exchange rate, and everything to do with the EU policy of encouraging rearing of pigs to over-supply, plus the fact that most EU countries have much lower, and therefore cheaper, standards of animal welfare than we have. Mr Ross may be guilty of failing to research the market before switching from cereal production, or just unfortunate in timing, but he cannot legitimately blame the pound.

The pound is not strong. Would that it were — there are great benefits in a strong currency: lower food, raw materi-

al, packaging and freight costs, and potential for lower fuel costs if our greedy Government stopped exploiting the benefit by constantly raising fuel tax. Twenty-five years ago when we entered the EEC, we had a small trade surplus with other EEC members; now we have an annual deficit with our EU partners in excess of £8 billion. Then, for a German to buy a pound's worth of British goods, he had to withdraw from his bank DM8.25; now, he needs take out only DM2.80. Is that strong? Anyway, can anyone name a single Western country that prospered for long with a weak currency? Yours faithfully, GERRY HANSON, Pottery Lodge, 74A Slough Road, Iwer Heath, Buckinghamshire, SL20 0DY.

Interest swings and tax roundabouts

From Mr A. D. Gatling

Sir, Janet Bush, in her interesting piece on interest rates (January 5) points out that the difference between our rates and those of euroland is unlikely to be maintained. More durable, however, is likely to be the difference in tax rates.

At an overall 35 per cent here, compared with an average of 45 per cent on the Continent, we would lose 15 per cent of after-tax income if we were forced to "harmonise" our tax

rates, against which any temporary saving on mortgages is small beer.

Indeed, one wonders whether this may be the chief attraction of EMU to Mr Blair. Once signed up, he would then be able to renege on his election promise not to raise taxes by claiming *force majeure*. Yours faithfully, A. D. GATLING, White Lodge, Berwick St James, Salisbury, SP3 4TZ.

Background to Berisford pay

From the Chairman of the Remuneration Committee, Berisford

Sir, City Diary (December 17) wrongly suggested that Berisford's chief executive enjoyed a big pay increase last year despite a fall in the group's profits. In 1998, profits before tax and exceptional — the best guide to performance — rose 36 per cent and earnings per share 30 per cent, although a £24.9 million exceptional profit on the repurchase of loan stock in the previous year did have the effect that profits at

the pre-tax level were down 17 per cent year-on-year.

Your report of November's results dealt with this correctly. In the past four years, underlying earnings per share have increased four-fold. Mr Bowker's bonus was genuinely performance-related. Yours faithfully, PENNY HUGHES, Chairman, Remuneration Committee, Berisford plc, 1 Baker Street, London, W1M 1AA.

Ship comes in

BOB GOODALL, co-ordinator at SOBS, the pressure group devoted to keeping our building societies, has had to part with a family heirloom to secure funds needed to disrupt the Halifax takeover of the Birmingham Midshires.

Next week, Bonhams will auction a painting left to him by his late father, Sir Ldr Bill Goodall. Ship entering the Thames estuary by the marine artist Norman Wilkinson is of any way, it is expected to raise between

£2,800 and £3,000. "My late father would have approved," he says.

Goodall senior was public relations manager for Glaxo, and also a campaigner. "When he stood for Parliament a number of times, he personally paid the required deposit."

A DAFT linguistic debate over the euro fr. of all places, Moscow, where the authorities have deemed the currency officially sedes.

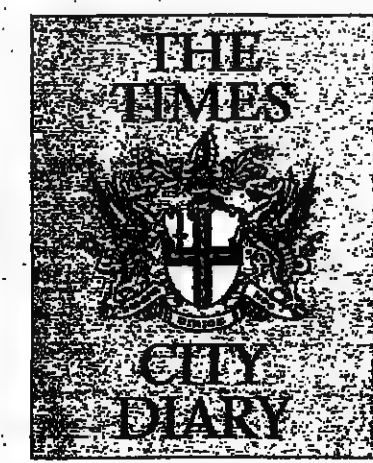
In European languages where they have to decide one way or the other, the euro is a bouncing boy — "un euro", "der euro", etc. In Russian, "yevro" should be neuter. But the local media have had it swinging both ways, either masculine or feminine.

So the central bank, sensing controversy, has reverted to Stalinist ways. "There is no official decision," said a spokesman.

Caught out

THE approach for AirTouch seems to have caught Chris Gent, Vodafone chief executive, in the outfield. He is on holiday in Australia watching the cricket, because the company is the England team's sponsor.

He has been there since December 26 and is expected back on Monday. Lord MacLaurin of Knebworth, Vo-



phone's chairman, is head of the England and Wales Cricket Board, and Gent himself is apparently mad keen on the sport.

Vodafone concedes that it is not terribly convenient to have your chief executive on the other side of the world during what is potentially the company's biggest deal. However, "the mobile phone network works in Australia extremely well," I am told.

Death wish

THE annual Savoy Lecture on the hospitality industry is usually addressed by a bigwig hotelier or whatever. But this year Anna, the organisers have gone for the film-maker Michael Winner. Winner assures me he was the industry's own choice — "they're either masochistic or they have a sense of

humour." His poisonous views on restaurants are well known from his column in *The Sunday Times*. It is hard not to warm to someone who believes the British public are being ripped off every time they open a table napkin, and he intends to say so at the lecture on February 4.

"We're the most inhospitable people in the world," he tells me — appropriately, from the Caribbean. "The English are just mugs when it comes to accepting bad service and then fuming about it afterwards."

BRITISH companies are so proud of sacking people that they announce the numbers years in advance and then add a few more when the time comes, just for completeness. Companies in euroland have not quite caught up with this.

One has just announced 1,000 redundancies for 1999, including 564 jobs it was supposed to cut last year but did not quite get around to. Guess who? Crédit Lyonnais, the French bank officially estimated to have cost taxpayers Fr150 billion, or as near as dammit £15 billion.

Free Whelan

MY PICTURE is of Charlie Whelan, spin-doctor turned ice-cream salesman, in the new publicity campaign by the Financial Services Authority on pensions mis-selling. Seriously, those at the FSA who have seen the commercial say the resemblance is breathtaking. Look out for it.

Incidentally, I hear there is serious talk of introducing a pension mis-selling storyline into *EastEnders*, the demonic soap opera. In the same way that *The Archers* occasionally lectures us on warble-fly. However, a colleague points out that it is unlikely any of the cast declare enough income to fund a personal pension.

In fact, the real reason the story will never appear is more fundamental. Any member of the *EastEnders* cast mis-sold a pension is more likely to solve the problem by taking a sawn-off shotgun to the head office of the firm responsible than by writing a letter to the FSA.

MARTIN WALLER



Lovely jolly: Charlie Whelan finally leaves the Treasury for a real job



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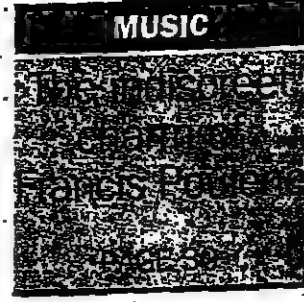
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POP
Will Smith
Setzer swing
into the charts?
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THE TIMES ARTS



A date with the end of the world

FILM: This year movie-makers are jumping on the millennium bandwagon, says James Mottram

From the predictions of Nostradamus to the Y2K bug, millennial angst has struck deep. With more than 2,000 books published on the subject since the 1950s, uncertainty and insecurity appear to govern most of the thinking surrounding the millennium. And the malaise has started to infiltrate our cinemas.

Apert from Kathryn Bigelow's 1995 film *Strange Days*, which depicted anarchy on the streets of Los Angeles on December 31, 1999, few film-makers have so far attempted to represent millennial fears. But now a glut of films is on the way to guide — or frighten — us towards the millennium. And the world has never looked more unstable, on celluloid at least.

First up is Darren Aronofsky's brash, low-budget debut *π*, a near-future piece of prophetic madness. Not strictly a millennium film, it nonetheless harnesses an impending sense of millennial paranoia through its protagonist, the reclusive mathematician Max (Sean Gullette). Max is being pursued by Wall Street brokers and Hasidic Jews, both convinced that the numerical code he has uncovered can unlock the stock market and Kabbalah texts respectively.

Aronofsky, who does not subscribe to an end-of-the-world hysteria, envisages the end of the century as a surrealistic distortion, inspired by his childhood. "No matter how much we laugh at the apocalypse and millennial fever, I think some of us have nightmares about it," he says. "As a kid I saw Orson Welles's documentary about Nostradamus. It was about how this mad guy from the Middle East would nuke New York City in 1999. So growing up there I was always terrified of the millennium."

"On the cinema screen, at least, the world is doomed"

While *π* can also be read as a universal expression of our fears of technology, other films have used the millennium as a reference point for examining contemporary culture at the end of the 20th century. *2000 Seen By* is an international anthology of ten films devoted to the millennium. With each film co-funded by the French company ARTE, the collection was initiated by the producers Caroline Benjo and Carole Scotta, the latter responsible for the Flemish filmmaker Alain Berliner's 1997 debut *Ma Vie en Rose*. Berliner is one of the directors called on to meditate on the impending date with *The Wall*, his magical realist examination of Belgium's cultural, linguistic and political boundaries.

Benjo sees the body of work as a shared set of visions. With films representing five continents, including Abderrahmane Sissako's examination of exile in *Africa Life on Earth*, the collective view-



Bleak vision: Riot police are on the streets of Los Angeles on New Year's Eve 1999 in Kathryn Bigelow's 1995 *Strange Days*, one of the first films to deal with the new millennium

point appears to be pessimistic reflection. "The millennium doesn't mean anything any more," argues Benjo, who partly initiated the project as a response to the growing delirium surrounding the date. "My life isn't going to change in 2000, and everybody knows that. I think we're all going to perceive it as the beginning of one thing and the end of another. It's time for you to say 'Well, this is what I think we did with ourselves, our lives, our culture'. If you see it under this light, each film says something of what it means to finish the 20th century."

Other culturally specific films in *2000 Seen By* bear this

out. Indie king Hal Hartley's tête-à-tête between Christ and the Devil in New York City, *The Book of Life*, is a controversial retelling of the Book of Revelation, with an ironic side-swipe at Big Apple life. Tsai Ming-Liang's examination of personal and political insecurity, *The Hole*, is an environmental warning sign about the accelerated decay of his country, Taiwan. *Midnight*, the Brazilian Walter Salles's follow-up to his forthcoming *Central Station*, depicts the coming together of a murderer and a potential suicide case. As Salles points out, it reflects upon the limitations of his own country, a place

"that has declined into decadence without ever having peaked."

The most prominent film in *2000 Seen By* is the Canadian writer-director-actor Don McKellar's *Last Night*, an apocalyptic look at the lives of several Toronto inhabitants on the eve of world destruction. First shown at the Cannes Film Festival when *Armageddon* and *Deep Impact* were similarly predicting global meltdown, McKellar's film is less sensationalist. "I thought of the practical implications of the event," says McKellar, whose film de-

picts people performing last-chance acts — from bizarre sex to reliving family yuletides gone by. "It's one thing to think 'I'd fly to Paris and climb the Eiffel Tower'. The chances are you wouldn't get that flight; not many pilots would be flying on their last day. I wanted to stick with people who built systems to protect themselves and decided to carry on regardless."

Metaphysical or practical, independent directors appear unable to get past the notion that the world is facing its demise. As Benjo points out: "Each film-maker had difficulty going over the date. Very few of them talked about Janu-

ary 1 in the year 2000." Not so for Hollywood, which has finally jumped on the millennial bandwagon. Written by the creators of *The X-Files*, *The Mark* is set to star Will Smith, saving the Earth once again as the planets align at the end of 2001 to rip us apart. The British take on the millennium comes from Kay Mellor, who makes her directorial debut with *Fanny and Elvis*. A romantic comedy with Ray Winstone and Kerry Fox as a couple expecting their first baby, as the millennium approaches, it offers a more homespun hope. Mellor, who created TV's *Band of Gold*, is more optimistic than most, pre-

fering a down-to-earth look "at somebody trying to get about their ordinary life on the night of the millennium". Like Benjo, Mellor sees her film as an opportunity to reflect on what has happened and will happen in the world around us, but without scare-mongering. "There's a lot of fear around. I can't imagine for one minute planes will drop out of the sky. We watch too much sci-fi. I can't imagine all these horrendous things are going to happen. We can put people on the Moon; surely we can deal with a few figures changing."

• opens on Friday

In the lap of arthouse luxury

After years of neglect, discerning filmgoers are being wooed with soft seats and sushi, Simon Tait discovers

Arthouse filmgoers have never been so popular. They are being brought in from the cold — not to mention the dingy, draughty and often smelly — to the luxurious, to multiplexes with special auditoriums and programmes shaped to their taste.

Warner Village Cinemas is offering them theatres with large screens and digital sound, where their leather seats recline at the touch of a button, where popcorn and Coke give way to sushi and champagne brought to their individual tables and individual ice buckets. Meanwhile, in partnership with City Screen, Mayfair Entertainment, owner of the Curzon cinemas, has gambled more than £2 million to eschew mainstream programming in its Shaftesbury Avenue cinema for a three-screen arthouse.

The new Curzon Soho is open from 8am, providing the kind of comfortable, clubby feel that the National Film Theatre had in mind for its proposed West End presence before it had to drop its plans. There is a street-level bar serving coffee, beer, sandwiches, magazines and gossip, a basement bistro-style café which doubles as an art gallery, and programming on three screens that covers the arthouse spectrum from nostalgia (such as Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life*, in the current programme) to cult (like Imamura's *The Earth*).

Thanks to multiplexes, the 52 million UK cinema admissions of 1994 have climbed to 130 million — but without any serious analysis of who the filmgoers are or what they want. Now cinema owners are not only waking up to the fact that their audiences have grown up, they're realising that they are wealthier, too.



Melbourne's Jam Factory — "the most successful cinema in Australia" — sets the UK pattern

"People who go to arthouse films care about the environment in which they see their choice of movies, and there is a growth in older audiences," says Mayfair's chief executive, Marc Vlesing. "But we can't afford to commit a single screen for specialist films, so we can open a new release in the bigger 249-seat auditorium and then move it to the smaller 130-seat or 110-seat one to give the film a proper season. We are serving a neighbourhood. Soho, and we intend to open more designed for the neighbourhoods they're in. A lot of people are coming here during

the day to meet people and have a drink without seeing a movie at all. There's an ageing audience in a younger market, and we're in danger of leaving them behind." Does it work? Officially, Curzon says it's too early to tell other than that there's been a "transformation" in ticket sales since they opened early in October. But insiders say they're selling as many tickets in a day as they were in a week.

Warner Village, the new kid on the high street, now has 22 multiplexes in Britain and will more than double that in three years. Among the develop-

ments it is about to announce is a 16-screen multiplex for Nottingham, on the site of the old *Evening Post*. Two of the auditoriums will be Europa Screens, dedicated to what Warner Village — a partnership for the UK between Warner Brothers and the Australian Village Roadshow — prefers to call non-mainstream rather than arthouse, with a bar slanted at the filmgoer devoted to subtitles. Two will be VIP Screens, the offspring of a highly successful Australian gamble. A year ago, three weeks before the new Village Roadshow multiplex was due

to open on the site of a jam factory in Melbourne's trendy Chapple Street, the company suddenly concluded that it was ignoring an older and richer audience and decided on a complete change of tack. In the parlance of our airline-wise culture, instead of consigning all its customers to tourist class, why not upgrade a significant element to business class? So in four of the 16 auditoriums, two-thirds of the seats were torn out and recliners put in with table service and all the trimmings, plus free popcorn if required. Ticket cost £25 compared with £11 for the other screens.

One year later its project manager, Simon Jeffries, is in Britain as Village's European projects manager. "The Jam Factory was instantly full and is the most successful cinema in Australia," he says. The Nottingham follow-up for 2000 is the first of many planned "bespoke" developments, tailored for their communities: Birmingham is to get a 30-screen Star City, also in 2000; in 2003 Battersea Power Station gets 25 screens and 8,000 seats; even medieval Worcester is to get a six-screen version.

"We're offering more bang for your buck, catering for an audience that is cash-rich and time-poor," Jeffries says. "It's not about elitism, it's about aspiration. People will pay more for the extra service in the VIP auditorium where the fuss of getting food and drink is sorted for them, and we also believe that you should be able to watch foreign-language or non-mainstream movies in a classy, European ambience. Multiplexes were becoming production lines for feeding teenagers action movies, but there is another dimension to the audience."

Clunk that clicks

THEATRE

Song at Twilight is far from Coward's best play. As I observed, Corin Redgrave in Sisyphus-like combat with some of the most lapidary dialogue the Master ever wrote, I found myself wondering if it is even particularly good. But it has a special importance because it is the piece in which, embodied by the spirit of the mid-1960s, the ageing Coward directly confronted the great unpublishable truth of his life. In the person of Sir Hugo Latymer, dramatist and novelist, he wrote directly about the predicament of the homosexual for whom fame and fortune mattered more, much more than emotional candour.

But note that word, "predicament". Latymer is not a self-portrait, nor is *Song* quite the confessional play some hold it to be. I don't know why Sheridan Morley, who is Coward's biographer as well as director of the highly competent staging at the King's Head, says in the programme he has "never quite believed" the author's claim that he based the play on Somerset Maugham. Latymer lacks Coward's grace, kindness and wit, and has spent his life flaunting a spurious heterosexuality, not least by making the sort of loveless marriage that would have morally disgusted Coward. That suggests Maugham, Maugham and Maugham again.



Nyree Dawn Porter does her best to fess as Coward's *Carlotta*

Yet Maugham's predicament was also that of Coward, Rattigan, and several other writers impelled by prejudice and a niggling censor to translate homosexual into heterosexual experience. It is a truism that *The Deep Blue Sea* and *Private Lives* fall into precisely that category. So if an actress called Carlotta Gray had arrived in his hotel suite, announcing her intention to hand some compromising letters to an American academic with biography on his mind, Coward would not have been vastly more enchanted than Latymer or Maugham. To that extent *Song at Twilight* lets light into his secret places.

But it is a pretty clunky piece. Even when Nyree Dawn Porter's sharp-witted Carlotta is exasperating Hugo with old memories, impudently requests and cutting accusations, the language refuses to fess as it would have barked and fizzed in Coward's 1920s or 1930s. And would even Maugham at his most pomp-

ous have answered an innocent remark about feeling the threat of rain in one's bones with "that particular form of prescience is rheumatic rather than clairvoyant"? Given a few opportunities for humour, Redgrave falls back on a tumbling superciliousness, and impresses mainly when fear and pain touch his half-ossified heart.

Nevertheless those moments, plus a touching profession of understanding, loyalty and grief from Kika Markham as Hugo's much-misused wife, do give the play some of the eloquence Coward wanted. Yes, Latymer's sexual misadventures have cost him and others a lot. But yes, he is right to protest that "even when the actual law [against homosexual acts] ceases to exist there will still be a stigma attached to the love that dare not speak its name in the minds of millions of generations to come".

BENEDICT NIGHTINGALE

Count's lac
sings the blu

GREAT BRITISH HOPPER

SIMONE BUSTINI



Visual Art: John

A master
from the N

Count's lady sings the blues

The story goes that Countess Bradford brought herself to the attention of her most celebrated employer, Count Basie, and suggested that he would be missing out if he didn't hire her to sing with his early-1980s orchestra. Her chutzpah paid off: she stayed nine years with the band, winning two Grammys along the way, and subsequently launched herself on a solo career so successful that Hollywood has reportedly taken out an option on her life story.

It was thus a little surprising to hear her confess to being nervous about her first appearance at Ronnie Scott's, particularly since she treats her audience with the formidable combination of strident heckling and intimate teasing patterned by the likes of her countrywomen Oprah Winfrey and Ricki Lake.

Such nerves were in any case thoroughly vanquished by the time Bradford had romped through her opening number, *Then There Eyes*. Hers is a raucous, attention-grabbing voice well suited to familiar up-tempo belters such as this, and with a neat yet assertive trio — pianist John Rangel, bassist Orlando Le Fleming, drummer Mark Fletcher — providing solid propulsion, she was quickly into her considerable stride.

A strong but soulful visit to *Maybe September* was personified by being preceded by the assertion that Bradford's mother — also a singer — made her do her chores to fit a skilfully scatted version of *Mr Pagani* sparked off a string of self-deprecatory anecdotes



about the number of people — including her father, the trumpeter Bobby Bradford — who had warned her not to tread on ground hallowed by Ella. It is ballad material, though, that provides a singer's acid test. Bradford's controlled glide through the melancholy end-of-relationship lament *Where Do You Start?*, while not quite reaching the emotional depths explored in Shirley Horn's version, nevertheless provided a highly effective contrast to such greasy, R&B-laced fare as *It Ain't No Use*, and her quietly contemplative *Young and Foolish* brought out all the song's mellow nostalgia without undue sentimentality.

Bradford's forte, however — unsurprisingly, given the Basie outfit's legendary aptitude in the form — is the blues. Her closing number, a loose, raucous celebration of the medium, consequently enabled her to showcase all her considerable talents: her voice swooped and soared; brightly inventive scat sections jostled appealingly with vigorous emotional outbursts and sudden ejaculations. By the time she had brought the number to an end with a powerful *That's All!*, Bradford had achieved her aim: an exuberant crowd had been audibly uplifted.

CHRIS PARKER

GREAT BRITISH HOPES

Rising stars in the arts firmament

SIMONE REBELLO

Age 27

Profession: Percussionist. She is the founder member of Backbeat, a percussion quartet which has built up a strong reputation over the past three years. You can hear them at the Purcell Room on February 2, or on their self-titled CD.

What's unusual about Backbeat's rhythm method? Instead of just standing behind drums, marimbas and music stands, Rebello and her three male colleagues roam the stage, sing, and use basketballs and their own bodies as instruments. "I wanted to make percussion more theatrical."

Basketball? "The lads are into basketball and play in rehearsal breaks. We wondered if we could incorporate the game into our concerts and quartet member Damien Harron created *Rebounds*, in which two of us drum and the others pick up the rhythm by bouncing basketballs on the stage."

Reperioire: "There's a lack of good quartet percussion music, so we write a lot ourselves. We also play work by people like John Cage and Steve Reich."

Base drums: She first picked up sticks as a schoolgirl in Croydon. "There was a very strong woodwind tradition and I dutifully signed up for the flute. But after a year on the waiting list, I thought 'This is never going to happen' and went along to percussion with a friend."

Tuition: She won two percussion prizes at the Royal Northern College in Manchester. "My tutors — Graham Johns, Ian Wright and Dave Hassall — were very influential. Seven years after graduating, if I'm in a fix I still go to them."

Why does her Portuguese surname sound familiar? She is a first cousin of the acclaimed jazz pianist Jason Rebello.

The Backbeat motto? "There's nothing we wouldn't do in a concert."

DANIEL ROSENTHAL



Soon, on a worldwide stage near your Big Bad Voodoo Daddy will have an audience of hundreds of millions when they entertain football fans at America's Super Bowl later this month

What daddy-o did in the war

POP: Stand by your zoot suits, the big bands are back — and jumping.

Nigel Williamson on the Forties sound that's hot in the Nineties

On the floor of New York's Hammerstein Ballroom zoot suits and flared skirts abound. Dances such as the lindy hop and the jitterbug, scarcely seen in half a century, are being executed with immaculate precision and flamboyant skill. On stage the Brian Setzer Orchestra, with its 13-piece brass section, all of them dressed in green suits behind matching orchestra desks, is blaring out a mixture of swing, jump and jive as if Cab Calloway and Louis Jordan had never gone away. At the bar the only drink to be seen sipping is a fruit-flavoured martini complete with umbrella. It may be 1999 but it seems that swing is the thing once again.

In an improbable pre-millennium trend, the big band craze is currently sweeping America, as a new generation discovers the excitement of a sound that was last in vogue at the end of the Second World War. Bands such as the Brian Setzer Orchestra, the Squirrel Nut Zippers and the Cherry Poppin' Daddies have sold millions of records in America over the past year. Last month *Rolling Stone*, still America's rock'n'roll bible, devoted a ten-page special to the swing revival. Later this month, another swing band, Big Bad Voodoo Daddy, will be seen by hundreds of millions of television viewers around the world, when they perform at American football's Super Bowl.

In Britain, too, swing is tipped to be the next big thing. Although there

has been little chart action to match America yet, clubs with names like Zoot Suit Riot are opening everywhere and there are now an estimated 40 dance nights a week around Britain, offering not only the best in swing music, but classes in the accompanying dance steps. There is a growing number of British swing bands, too, led by the Big Six from London, who have just signed a major deal with Mercury Records.

"It's a reaction to years of grunge," says Jason Moss of Cherry Poppin' Daddies from Oregon, who have sold a million albums in America and made a big impact on their first visit to Britain last year. "The prevailing sound has been very dark and introspective for a long time. People are tired of that and want something more exuberant."

Big Bad Voodoo Daddy were perhaps the first to draw attention to the swing revival when they appeared in Jon Favreau's 1996 hit movie, *Swingers*. "We're coming from a jump sound, from people like Louis Armstrong, who played music that was more raw, more rocking than traditional swing," says singer and guitarist Scotty Moore. "I've never thought of our music as retro. Swing was originally like punk rock, the early primitive stuff, that big band mambo with

people dancing in the aisles before it became polished and clean and tame. What we do is wild and swinging Forties music with a Nineties twist."

All are agreed that the swing revival has no future if it just sets out to replicate the sound of the past. "If you

"Swing was like punk rock, the early primitive stuff, that big band mambo with people dancing in the aisles"

lick of paint then and that's what we are doing now."

Like the Cherry Poppin' Daddies, Setzer's album, *The Dirty Boogie*, went Top Ten in America. The sound is loaded with brass but is dirtier and funkier than the smooth mellifluousness of a Glenn Miller or Benny Goodman. "It's rockabilly, swing and rock'n'roll all put in that big band thing," Setzer says. "Everyone said: 'What are you doing taking big band music from the Forties and adding electric guitar?' They said it would never work. Now it's rolling. It's got style, a great vibe and great dances. It's on fire."

Setzer, who has also played on albums with Bob Dylan, Robert Plant and Ricki Lee Jones, put the orchestra together in 1993. "They were basically jazz musicians and I couldn't explain how to rock to them so it was initially hard," he says. "But we went on the road for a 50-city North American tour and they soon learnt. It hasn't been easy from a business standpoint. The cost of touring with such a large band is enormous and at first there was no radio airplay or music video exposure. We built it up on word of mouth. Once people saw us they would talk about us and that's how it eventually

took off." The orchestra is due in Britain in March.

Most of the new generation of swing musicians are not teenage hopefuls but thirtysomethings disillusioned with the banality of much modern rock music. Steve Perry, 34, of the Cherry Poppin' Daddies, says: "Swing bands are the antithesis of all those tired rock clichés. It's less tortured. There is no reason why swing can't be a viable modern music. Does it all have to be angst? When Count Basie got out there and smiled and the band was all brassy, it felt like a warm day and everything was going to be all right. What's wrong with that? Swing is probably addressing some kind of need in people right now."

Robert Austin, Britain's leading promoter of swing and a former dance champion himself, agrees. His club nights attract huge crowds, many of them dressed in full Forties costume. "When the Cherry Poppin' Daddies came to play in London I thought it was the best thing I had seen since the Jam in 1970," he says. "Swing in Britain is really exciting. We've seen what has happened in America and I'm sure exactly the same is going to happen here. It's a wave and you can either ride it or get very wet."

● The Dirty Boogie by the Brian Setzer Orchestra and Zoot Suit Riot by Cherry Poppin' Daddies are both released by Universal Records. Big Bad Voodoo Daddy's album will be released in the spring

VISUAL ART: In Venice, John Russell Taylor stands stunned by the contradictory wisdom of the Ancients

A masterclass from the Mayas

I magne a civilisation so sophisticated that it could still give us pointers on the measurement of time and the movement of heavenly bodies, and yet one whose technology did not include the wheel, and whose graphic art knew nothing of perspective. Add the fact that all its remains offer no unequivocal evidence of ferocious humour, and seem to exclude completely the gentler feelings of love and tenderness. Something on another planet, maybe? Certainly that is where one often feels oneself to be in the often fabulous *Maya* show, the latest of a series which has already filled Fiat's Venice art flagship, the Palazzo Grassi with the Celts, the Phoenicians and the Greeks.

But if one feels strange, one never feels alienated. No belief in intervention from outer space is required to fit the Maya into the human race. It is just not quite the human race as we Indo-Europeans know it. It is a measure of the civilisation's philosophical sophistication that it could comprehend and reconcile opposites without the slightest difficulty, while in Europe generally, we in Europe struggle in vain, and struggle still. This may be the reason that for every categorical assertion

about the Maya and what they did and did not do, did and did not know, there is always at least one glaring exception.

We say they did not know the wheel, and for themselves they did not. But their children's toys often ran on

"Throughout the show the shock of strangeness and of recognition recurs"

wheels. We say that they never discovered perspective, and yet there is one obvious instance, in a ceiling painting from Bonampak meticulously reconstructed for this show, where on one side a wounded warrior sprawls up a flight of stairs with quite Mannerist abandon, in full perspective some seven centuries before the Spanish conquest. It is almost as though they knew everything, but just chose not to bother with some. Even humour and tenderness may per-

haps be seen, although the only tender moment is in a small ceramic where a young woman delicately touches the face of a very old man, and we can only guess at humorous intent in some of the more grotesque figurines.

A large archaeological show like this should preferably satisfy both the specialist and the general public. For the experts in matters Mayan I have spoken to, the first criterion is well met: they are all ecstatic about the depth of the curators' researches, the astonishing way that if some tiny provincial museum in Mexico has just one outstanding piece, it has been tracked down and borrowed. At worst there are some quibbles about interpretation.

As far as the wider public is concerned, there can be no doubt whatever. If before entering you knew of the Maya only that they lived in Mexico before the conquest, you could rely on coming out with a clear insight into the history and a vivid feel for the nature of this remote and mysterious culture. Better still, you would have had an unforgettable aesthetic experience.

From that point of view, *Maya* is probably the best of the Palazzo Grassi's archaeological blockbusters. It might



A ceramic showing an anthropomorphic figure emerging from a flower, found at Jaina Island, Campeche, Mexico

fairly be said of some of its predecessors that they were fascinating in a Brain-of-Britain kind of way, but great art was a little thin on the ground. Here, on the other hand, the simple, monumental design of Agata Toricella Crespi and her

team is perfectly calculated to show off the works included as things worth looking at in themselves, rather than as mere stages in a continuing historical argument.

And what wonders it offers the eye. Should one arrive by

water, the first thing one sees is the Chac Mool reclining figure in stone which so inspired Henry Moore that it set off the great series of reclining figures which were to preoccupy him for the next half a century. Whatever else, it serves to remind us that nothing in art is so remote that it cannot feed something of itself into our own aesthetic mindset.

Throughout the show the shock of strangeness and simultaneously of recognition recurs. The grander temple sculptures of gods and priests still seem decidedly sinister, but at the same time stagger us with their totally confident grasp of contained yet dynamic form. From the largest stone sculpture to the smallest ceramic, one cannot but be impressed with the Mayan sense of proportion, their ability to combine obsessively intricate detail with a daringly simple grasp of the whole to which the detail must ultimately be subordinated.

The show's other big surprise is the richness and variety of the colours in Mayan life and art. Most of even the largest carvings seem to have been brilliantly painted, while the pictures on plates and vessels, the reconstructed murals and the illuminations in manuscripts (represented by photographs, since the originals are too delicate to travel) all testify to the astounding life which surrounded and contained the Mayan obsession with death — very much as it does in modern Mexico.

● *Maya*, Palazzo Grassi, San Samuele, Venice (0039041 522 9875)

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Court of Appeal

Lender can take possession with no order

Ropgealach v Barclays Bank plc
Before Lord Justice Henry, Lord Justice Chadwick and Lord Justice Clarke

[Judgment December 18]
A mortgage lender was entitled to exercise its common law right to take possession of a mortgaged dwelling house without first obtaining a court order.

The protection afforded to the borrower by section 36 of the Administration of Justice Act 1970 only applied where the lender had brought an action for possession.

The Court of Appeal so held in a judgment dismissing an appeal by the borrower, *Barclays Bank plc*, against the decision of Mr Justice Longmore in *Ropgealach v Barclays Bank plc*, [1998] 1 All ER 813.

Where the mortgagee has an action in which its claim for possession of the mortgaged property is the sole or principal issue, the court may make an order for possession of the mortgaged property, or an order for possession of the mortgaged property, or an order for possession of the mortgaged property.

Section 36 of the 1970 Act provides that where the mortgagee has an action in which its claim for possession of the mortgaged property is the sole or principal issue, the court may make an order for possession of the mortgaged property, or an order for possession of the mortgaged property, or an order for possession of the mortgaged property.

Section 36 was expressed to apply where a lender brought an action in which its claim for possession of the mortgaged property was the sole or principal issue.

Where the conditions in subsection (1) were satisfied the court was given powers, by subsection (2), which could fairly be described as procedural, in the sense that they were only capable of being exercised in the context of existing proceedings in which a claim for possession was made.

But the borrower had said, Parliament could not have intended that the protection against repossession without a court order was intended to give to borrowers in respect of their homes should be capable of being frustrated by a lender who resorted to self-help; that was to say, by a lender who obtained possession by entry without the assistance of the court.

Accordingly, he submitted, the section must be construed in such a way as to make it unlawful for a lender to take possession of a dwelling house except under an order of the court.

It had never become clear in argument how, by any interpretation of the words actually used, that result could be achieved, but that section had been brushed aside as unduly technical. What mattered, it was said, was that the court should give effect to the purpose for which the section had been enacted.

The genesis of section 36 was not in dispute. In *Birmingham City Council v Bell*, [1994] 1 All ER 751, the House of Lords held that a lender could not take possession of a mortgaged property without first obtaining a court order.

Count [1962] Ch 883) it had been held that the necessary consequence of the legal foundation upon which a mortgage was based was that the court had no power to order a lender to grant a mortgagee possession of the mortgaged property.

That decision had put an end to a practice which had been developed by the Chancery masters under which mortgage possession suits were adjourned to give the borrower an opportunity to pay by instalments.

It was plain that section 36 had been enacted in order to deal with the problem which had arisen following *Count*, and which had been the subject of examination and recommendation by the Payne Committee in *Enforcement of Judgments* (1969) (Cmd 3909).

There was nothing in the circumstances of the case which suggested that section 36 was intended to deal with a different problem, not then identified, arising from entry without an order of the court.

Nor was there anything in the language of the section itself which lent support to that submission. If the section had been intended to deal with the problems arising from entry without an order of the court, it would have been enacted in the form in which it was.

The language of the section, as well as the circumstances in which it had been enacted, lent strong support to the view expressed in the Law Commission Working Paper No 99 *Land Mortgages* (1986) at paragraph 3.69.

The court can exercise its discretion, under section 36, only if the mortgagee applies to it for a possession order; technically, therefore, the mortgagee can deprive the mortgagor of protection by electing to seek some other means of enforcement.

In support of the contention that the court should give what he described as a purposive construction to section 36, the borrower relied on two decisions on the effect of a comparable provision in section 5 of the *Law of Property (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1989* (*Remon v City of London Real Estate Co* [1992] 1 KB 664) and *Cruise v Telford* [1992] 1 KB 664).

Those decisions provided no support for the borrower's contention that section 36 of the 1970 Act should be given a construction which, in the language used, it could not bear.

Remon and *Cruise*, properly understood, provided examples of the court constraining statutory provisions to give effect to a clearly identifiable purpose by a legitimate process of interpretation.

There was no comparable process of construction by which the words used by the legislature in section 36 could be held to have the effect which the borrower contended.

The borrower could derive no assistance from *Western Bank Ltd v Schindler* [1997] Ch 1. It provided a very good illustration of the principles on which the court acted when faced with the problem that a literal construction of the words used by the legislature would give rise to an obvious lacuna or absurdity.

An English judge was not to indulge in judicial legislation. Before he could imply words into an Act, the statutory intention must be plain and the insertion not too big, or too much at variance with the language in fact used by the legislature.

It was impossible to be satisfied that Parliament must have intended, when enacting section 36, that the lender's common law right to take possession by virtue of its estate should only be exercisable with the assistance of the court.

The only conclusion as to Parliamentary intention that the court could properly reach was that which could be derived from the circumstances in which the section was enacted, the statutory context in which it appeared and the language which was used. All pointed in the same direction.

Parliament had been concerned with the problem which had arisen following *Count*. It had intended to restore the position to what it had been thought to be before that decision and it did not address its mind to the question whether the borrower required protection against the lender who took possession without the assistance of the court.

It was not irrelevant that, at the date at which the 1970 Act was enacted, the borrower who was in occupation had the protection, subsequently replaced in a different and, perhaps, more limited form by section 6 of the Criminal Law Act 1977, afforded by the Forcible Entry Acts 1981-1983.

It was because it was impossible to be sure that Parliament could not have intended to leave the position as it was, that it could not be appropriate to embark on an investigation whether the words which had been used were capable of some other construction than that which they naturally bore.

Lord Justice Henry and Lord Justice Clarke gave concurring judgments.

Solicitors: Phoenix Walters, Cardiff; Everheds, Cardiff.

Regina v Secretary of State for the Home Department, Ex parte Samsi
Before Lord Justice Evans, Lord Justice Ward and Lord Justice Brooke

[Judgment December 16]
The making of a deportation order against a person after a decision of intention to deport had been issued but while a claim for asylum by him was outstanding was invalid.

The Court of Appeal so held in a reserved judgment allowing the appeal of the applicant, Ganiyu Abake Samsi, pursuant to leave granted to her by the Court of Appeal on May 22, 1998, to apply for judicial review of the decision by Mr Justice Carnwath on May 18 of her application for leave to apply for judicial review against a deportation order made by the Secretary of State for the Home Department dated November 22, 1996. The court ordered that the deportation order be quashed.

Miss Samsi in person, Mr Ian Burnett, QC and Miss Lisa Giovannetti for the Secretary of State.

LORD JUSTICE BROOKE said that the point in issue, shortly stated, was that at the time the deportation order was made the applicant had made an application for asylum, and she was not notified that her application had been refused until some two and a half months after the deportation order was signed.

Her case was that the Home Office's procedure was unlawful because the language of the deportation order required her to leave the United Kingdom, while section 6 of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993 prevented such a requirement being made in the case of an asylum-seeker between the time the claim to asylum was made and the time when the secretary of state gave notice of the decision on the claim.

words in section 6 in the context of modern immigration legislation. The 1971 and 1993 Acts were so closely linked that it would not be proper to construe them in such a way that the same words bore one meaning in one Act and another meaning in the other.

By section 5(1) of the 1971 Act a deportation order was quite unambiguously expressed, and as soon as it was in force it invalidated any prior grant of leave to remain in the United Kingdom.

The applicant might win a Pyrrhic victory, since it was the case that even if the original deportation order was quashed the secretary of state could make another such order immediately without any prior formalities or right of appeal.

The court would assume, however, that he would not do so without first giving anxious and careful consideration of the circumstances of her case: she was now nearly 21, had been in the country since she arrived soon after her thirteenth birthday, had done well in her studies and been no burden on the state.

Both her parents were dead and her elder sister with whom she lived had a lame back. She had now been in detention for six months as a consequence of the making of an invalid deportation order.

Those were matters which the secretary of state would take into account when he reconsidered his decision in the case. They were not matters for the court.

Lord Justice Ward and Lord Justice Evans agreed.

Solicitors: Treasury Solicitor.

Serving interrogatories before discovery complete

Corporacion Nacional del Cere de Chile v Metallgesellschaft AG Ltd and Others
Before Judge Colyer, QC

[Judgment November 23]
There was no absolute rule precluding service of interrogatories before the completion of discovery or the exchange of witness statements.

Interrogatories could be served where they were necessary for disposing fairly of the cause or matter for paying costs. An interrogatory was necessary if, unless it was served, it would be impossible to obtain a proper judgment on the issues in the case.

Judge Colyer, QC, sitting as an additional Chancery judge, said, "It is well known that the plaintiff, *Corporacion Nacional del Cere de Chile*, from the order of Deputy Master Mark requiring the withdrawal of certain interrogatories served by the plaintiff on the third defendant, *Metallgesellschaft AG*, on the grounds that the service of interrogatories was premature.

Mr Ian Gearing, QC and Mr Anthony Robinson for the plaintiff; Mr Kenneth MacLean for *Metallgesellschaft AG* and *Metallgesellschaft AG*.

elischah Ltd; Mr David Donaldson, QC and Mr Paul Goulding for *Metallgesellschaft AG*.

HIS LORDSHIP said that the plaintiff, a company wholly owned by the Chilean government which produced and traded in copper, alleged that the three defendants conspired to pay a bribe of \$1.5 million to the plaintiff's sales manager in order to obtain the business of the second defendant, the UK subsidiary of the first defendant, by that amount and cooperating in this division of that sum to the sales manager's personal bank account in the Cayman Islands.

The essential question on this application was whether the interrogatories served on *Metallgesellschaft AG* by the plaintiff, a metals trader employed by a subsidiary of the first defendant and the first defendant's agent in its dealings with the plaintiff, were necessary either for disposing fairly of the matter or for saving costs.

While the statement of claim was served over two years ago, discovery was still in its early stages and no date had been set for the exchange of witness statements.

Mr Gearing contended that costs could be saved and the evidential trial shortened, if not avoided altogether, by interrogating Mr Becker as to the salient facts now.

Relying on *Attorney-General v Gaskill* [1988] 2 All ER 319, he pointed out that as Order 38, rule 2A of the Rules of the Supreme Court explicitly recognised that in-

terrogatories could affect whether and to what extent witness statements were necessary, a fortiori, Order 38, rule 2 recognised that, albeit in rare cases, interrogatories might properly be served prior to the exchange of witness statements.

The interrogatories in the present case were not oppressive. The questions, although numerous (over 150 in all), broke down into three distinct series, and in many instances were capable of short and immediate answers.

It was at least reasonably possible that the answers to the interrogatories might shorten or even dispense with a full trial, or at least make some of the further discovery unnecessary.

If the answer was "I do not know, I was not there and did not authorise such a step", they could very easily be disposed of.

The privilege against self-incrimination meant that the defendant could decline to give a substantial answer, not that the interrogatories could not be put; see *Spokes v The Grosvenor and West End Railway Terminus Hotel Company Ltd* [1897] 2 QB 124.

HIS LORDSHIP rejected the submission of Mr Donaldson, based on *Hall v Sevalco Ltd* [1996] 1 All ER 344, that the openly declared objective of the plaintiff in the present application, namely to prepare for and mount an application for summary judgment, could not constitute a clear litigious purpose necessary to justify the interrogatories.

It seemed to his Lordship that if investigative agents employed by solicitors for the purpose of litigation were permitted to reach the provisions of such statutes or to indulge in fraud or impersonation without any consequence at all for the conduct of litigation, then the courts would be going too far to sanction such conduct.

However, there was the sanction of any prosecution or civil suits, and those must always remain the primary sanction for any breach of the criminal or civil law.

But it seemed to his Lordship that criminal or fraudulent conduct for the purposes of acquiring evidence in or for litigation could not properly escape the consequences that any documents generated by or reporting on such conduct and which were relevant to the issues in the case were discoverable and fell outside the legitimate area of legal professional privilege.

In his Lordship's judgment, the *Kuruma* principle was consistent with that view rather than against it. That principle was concerned with vindicating the truth with the aid of relevant evidence rather than excluding such evidence on the ground that it had been improperly obtained.

stating the Interrogation of Mr Becker to obtain information or admissions which were likely to be contained in the pleadings, discoverable documents and/or a witness statement.

If interrogatories were legitimate in preparation for trial there was no reason why they could not be equally legitimate in preparation for an application for summary judgment, provided that the case had the makings of an Order 14 case and was not objectionable as a fishing expedition.

The present case did have sufficient Order 14 potential.

Mr Donaldson contended that, in the modern procedural context, the interrogatories were premature: see *Dot Danika Handelskredit v KDM International Ltd* [1994] 2 All ER 344; *Hall v Sevalco Ltd* [1996] 1 All ER 344; *UJ Bank plc v Halifax Ltd* (unreported, CA, June 10, 1997).

However, the observations of Mr Justice Colman in *Dot Danika Handelskredit*, approved by the Court of Appeal in *Hall v Sevalco* notwithstanding, Order 26, rule 1 did not say: "After discovery and the exchange of witness statements a party may serve interrogatories."

It would be wrong to read those words into the rules. Each case had to be considered on its own facts by reference to the Order 26, rule 1(1) criteria of necessity.

"Necessity" was an ordinary English word with a range of meanings. In the instant context it could not mean "absolute necessity," but had to mean a strong or compelling reason, or something which would prevent the desired result, that is, the fair disposal of the case or the saving of costs, if it was not done.

It was pedantically accurate, an interrogatory was necessary if, unless it was served, it would be impossible to attempt a proper litigious purpose.

"Proper litigious purpose" meant not just one that was defined and easily ascertainable but also one which was appropriate.

An application under Order 14 would rarely constitute such a clear and proper litigious purpose, although in the somewhat unusual scenario of the present case the interrogatories in question satisfied those criteria.

Solicitors: Herbert Smith; Slaughter & May; Farrer & Co.

Certifying freezing order as a judgment

Normaco and Another v Landman and Others
Before Mr Justice Carnwath

[Judgment December 17]
An inter partes pre-judgment Mareva order, freezing one of the party's assets, was a judgment which the court had jurisdiction to certify for enforcement and recognition in a foreign jurisdiction.

Mr Justice Carnwath so held in the Chancery Division when making an order on the application of the plaintiffs pursuant to Order 71, rule 36 of the Rules of the Supreme Court certifying the order dated February 17, 1998 made in the action.

Mr Ian Gearing, QC and Mr Stephen Phillips for the plaintiffs. MR JUSTICE CARNWATH

said that the application was made for the enforcement and recognition in Switzerland of a pre-judgment Mareva order.

Order 71, rule 36 provided that the application "must be made ex parte". It was useful to explain the application of that rule to Mareva orders.

The relevant provisions required the term "judgment" to be interpreted in accordance with section 50 of the Civil Jurisdiction and Judgments Act 1982 and article 25 in each of the Brussels and Lugano Conventions on Jurisdiction and the Enforcement of Judgments in Civil and Commercial Matters and set out in Schedules 1 and 3C to the 1982 Act.

The words of those provisions were wide enough to include a Mareva order. The position was summarised in *Dick v Morris* [1993] 1 All ER 813.

In *Babani International Co SA v Bassatine* [1990] 1 Ch 13, 31 Lord Justice Kerr set out the effect of those provisions which made it clear that a Mareva order might be certified in principle provided that it was inter-partes or where the defendant had had an opportunity to resist the plaintiff's application. The latter phrase was solely concerned with certifying the judgment.

HIS LORDSHIP referred to *The Atlantic Emperor No 2* [1992] 1 Lloyd's Rep 624 and said that it was clear that he had jurisdiction to certify the judgment.

Solicitors: Palmer Cowen.

No legal privilege for iniquity

Dual Aluminium Co Ltd v Sadi Reyad Abdulla S. Naser Al Alawi and Others
Before Mr Justice Rix

[Judgment December 3]
Evidence obtained through criminal fraudulent conduct by private investigators employed by solicitors for use in and relevant to issues in litigation was discoverable and not protected by legal professional privilege.

Mr Justice Rix so held in the Queen's Bench Division, in allowing discovery under Order 24, rule 7 of the Rules of the Supreme Court of reports and documents relating to investigations into the financial affairs of Mr Al Alawi.

That *Aluminium Co Ltd* (Dubai) had been recognised that there was a clash of principle and public interest. There was strong public interest in legal professional privilege. There was also the public interest, no less strong, in combating crime or fraud and in protecting the victims or potential victims of it.

There was also the public interest, reflected in *Kuruma v The Queen* [1965] AC 197, 205, in requiring courts to give effect to the attempt to arrive at a true and just determination at trial.

HIS LORDSHIP acknowledged that the problem of data protection was a modern one, reflected by the relatively recent date of the 1984 Act and the fact that the ramifications of that legislation were only

still more recently becoming clearer. He saw the advice issued by the Bar Council in July 1997, "The Data Protection Act 1984 and the Bar" and *Go on: Mareva Injunctions and Anton Piller Relief* (4th edition) (1998) 121.

It seemed to his Lordship that if investigative agents employed by solicitors for the purpose of litigation were permitted to reach the provisions of such statutes or to indulge in fraud or impersonation without any consequence at all for the conduct of litigation, then the courts would be going too far to sanction such conduct.

However, there was the sanction of any prosecution or civil suits, and those must always remain the primary sanction for any breach of the criminal or civil law.

But it seemed to his Lordship that criminal or fraudulent conduct for the purposes of acquiring evidence in or for litigation could not properly escape the consequences that any documents generated by or reporting on such conduct and which were relevant to the issues in the case were discoverable and fell outside the legitimate area of legal professional privilege.

In his Lordship's judgment, the *Kuruma* principle was consistent with that view rather than against it. That principle was concerned with vindicating the truth with the aid of relevant evidence rather than excluding such evidence on the ground that it had been improperly obtained.

erly come by. That principle could not be said to require privilege even where crime or fraud had been committed to obtain information.

Ultimately it seemed to his Lordship that criminal or fraudulent conduct undertaken for the purposes of litigation fell on the same side of the line as advising on or setting up criminal or fraudulent transactions yet to be undertaken, as distinct from the entirely legitimate professional business of advising and assisting clients on their past conduct, however iniquitous.

The Queen v Cox [1984] 14 QBD 153, 167 supported that conclusion. His Lordship was therefore of the opinion that the documents sought were in principle within the established exception.

As to the extent of disclosure required in an event of disclosure required in such a case that could always raise difficult questions, but the problem was not a new one. It had to be solved on a case-by-case basis, and even on a document-by-document basis, in accordance with principles such as those laid down in *Bank of Nova Scotia v Hellenic Mutual War Risks Association Ltd* [1992] 2 Lloyd's Rep 540; *G. E. Capital Corporate Finance Group Ltd v Bankers Trust Co* [1995] 1 WLR 173 and *Hellenic Mutual War Risks Association Ltd v Harrison* [1997] 1 Lloyd's Rep 160.

Solicitors: Warner Cranston; Philippschaw Crawford Bervald.

Order ensures survival of partnership

Ine H. S. Smith and Sons
Before Mr Justice Park

[Judgment December 7]
A partnership was unable to pay itself, so as to qualify it for the discretionary making of an administration order under section 8(1) of the Insolvency Act 1986, as restated in Schedule 2 to the Insolvency Partnerships Order (SI 1994 No 2421), notwithstanding that the value of the assets of its partners exceeds its liabilities.

Mr Justice Park so held in the Chancery Division, in making an administration order under section 8(1) in respect of a family farming partnership comprising Harry Sea Smith, Francis Smith and his son, Ivan Smith, which was part of a farm of which Harry Sea Smith was the freeholder.

Mr Glen Davis for the partnership; no creditor appeared or was represented.

MR JUSTICE PARK said that the restated section 8(1) provided that before the court could make an administration order in respect of an insolvent partnership:

(1) it had to be satisfied that the partnership was unable, as distinct from likely to become unable, the test in respect of companies, or was deemed to be unable to pay its debts as they fell due, or if the value of its assets was less than the amount of its liabilities: see section 224(1)(a) and (2) of the 1986 Act.

(2) it had to consider that the making of an order would be likely to achieve one or more of three purposes:

(a) the survival of the undertaking or part of it as a going concern;

(b) the approval of a voluntary arrangement under Part I of the 1986 Act;

(c) a more advantageous realisation of the partnership's property than would be effected on a winding-up.

Of crucial importance, and a major difference from insolvency of a company, was the personal liability of each of the partners for the partnership's debts: in particular Mr Harry Smith, having contracted to sell part of the land and agreed, subject to contract, to sell a cottage, could comfortably pay off those debts.

Did that fact preclude satisfaction of the first condition above?

HIS LORDSHIP thought not. The partnership itself was unable to pay its debts and the value of its assets was less than that of its liabilities, notwithstanding that its creditors had full recourse against Mr Harry Smith.

The petition relied on an administration order being likely to achieve all the purposes set out in section 8(1), the most important being that in section 8(1)(a): "the survival of the undertaking of the partnership as a going concern."

The making of an administration order would hold off the creditors from petitioning to wind up the partnership and give Mr Harry Smith time to recapitalize the partnership, in which case its business would survive as a going concern. It was plainly desirable that his Lordship should exercise his discretion in favour of making an administration order.

Solicitors: Matthew Arnold & Baldwin, Wadford.



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Rachel Kelly reports on the proposal for the Land Registry that will end the property price guessing game

Your biggest investment is no longer a secret

Dinner parties will never be the same again. Henceforth, we may be able to know the price that sellers originally paid for their houses and the putative profit that they could enjoy.

Such juicy figures and an intimate knowledge of our neighbour's bank balance will fuel our national obsession with house prices and the joys of making more money by watching the wallpaper than by going out to work.

Ministers are expected to announce shortly that henceforth the Land Registry, the government body that records property transactions, will soon include the price paid for a property alongside details of its registered title, mortgage and conveyancing.

Potential buyers could apply for a copy of the title, or if they have on-line access via the Land Registry direct access service, view the entry from a computer.

The reforms are part of Labour's manifesto commitment to freedom of information, and have been the subject of discussion since 1983 in the run-up to the opening of the Land Registry to the public in 1990.

They are also part of the Government's wider aim to reform the housebuying process, which is currently the subject of a consultation paper at the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions. Providing such information could be included in a logbook or sellers' pack to be assembled by sellers before putting a property on the market.

Should the reform be implemented, England and Wales will mirror the Scottish system where property prices have been a matter of public record since 1917.

It will be a return to the system used in England until 1976 when prices were included on the Land Registry, but since the Registry was not then open to the public, the prices could be disclosed only by permission of the owner.

Then the system was abused by solicitors, who often erased the previous selling price. The lawyers argued that if buyers could see how hugely the house price had risen, they might try to renegotiate.

Others argue that the price paid in a property transaction is essentially a private affair and is not in the public domain, and thus should not be the Government's to disclose. Certainly, the number of

Anything that demystifies the housebuying process is a good thing. It will make valuation easier

agents whose clients are obsessed with confidentiality clauses bears witness to the desire for secrecy about what is for many their biggest financial transaction.

Many lawyers still oppose the reforms, and have been lobbying the Lord Chancellor's Department to make their views known. So do some agents, such as David Parry, from Cluttons Daniel Smith in Maidstone. "Such an idea is an invasion of privacy," he says. "Property values can rise or fall in very

short periods of time. It may paint the wrong picture."

But most estate agents and surveyors have broadly welcomed the move and they are right to do so. The changes will see an end to inflated claims by irresponsible agents about how much a house is worth, only to win the commission for the sale.

Ultimately, says Guy Foster from Friend & Falcke, the London estate agents, the reforms will steady the housing market and restrain prices from galloping away from reality in an inflationary boom, which economists now agree has damaging effects on the wider economy.

More information in general leads to more efficiency and such figures would be useful in terms of tracking the reality of what is happening to actual prices, rather than relying on the research of commercial organisations such as the Halifax and the Nationwide Building Society. It would help, too, in fraud cases.

"This should make the property market more efficient," says a spokesman for the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, which has campaigned for change.

"Such information is already freely available in Scotland, Northern Ireland, Australia, New Zealand and many European countries."

"The experience of openness in all of these countries is that personal and commercial privacy has not been compromised. Nor has the information been misused."

Willie Gething, from the buyers' agents Property Vision, says: "Anything that demystifies the housebuying process is a good thing. It will make valuations easier and will leave less room for economic



Those were the days: flashback to the time when homes could be bought for a few thousand pounds

guessing." Indeed, many switched on buyers already try to find out as much about other sales in the area or the street in which they are interested, and such comparable sales are an essential element of the services provided by buying agents who do their best to assess values accurately.

But property experts also caution that the figures need to be used with care. Guy Foster notes that if a buyer can call up the Land Registry and find out all the house prices within the same street, this could complicate negotiations.

He says: "The Land Registry will not record the condition of a property, the size of rooms or its internal decorations." Richard Lambert from the British Property Federation echoes con-

cerns that the information could be misleading. Finer details of deals such as rent-free periods or methods of payment such as share swaps do not have to be included.

To have to answer "yes" or "no" to the proposals is to oversimplify the issue, Mr Lambert argues. Rather he wishes to see the proposal, which does have merit, fine-tuned.

Willie Gething points to other complications. In the country, many homes are registered in two parts: for example a rectory might be registered separately from some land or a cottage. Government figures could be misleading.

He says: "They may read that there have been no property sales of more than £2 million in Wiltshire in the past year, whereas we

will know of maybe three or four sales. The reason is that the sales included land or outbuildings which were recorded separately from the main house."

Getting notes, too, that there could be complications with leasehold extensions which mean that prices are not necessarily comparable.

He says: "A house sold with a 50-year lease a few years ago may now be for sale with an extended 75-year lease."

The message is that if prices are published, such figures need to be treated with caution.

The approach may not add to the gale of dinner parties, but should add to the efficiency of the more prosaic business of valuations.

SMART MOVES

CHRIS EVANS, the owner of Virgin Radio, has bought a flat in Wilton Crescent, SW1. The ground floor and basement flat was sold on a short lease for about £700,000.

THE home of Sir Alan Glyn, the late Conservative MP who was also a soldier, barrister, doctor and expert on international affairs, is being sold by Farley and Co for £3 million. Seventeen Cadogan Place, SW1, consists of a main house and news house, both in need of refurbishment. According to Dickens in *Nicholas Nickleby*, Cadogan Place was the connecting link "between the aristocratic pavements of Belgrave Square and the barbarism of Chelsea".

FUNTINGS, in Kirdford, West Sussex, a 17th-century Grade II listed house, is for sale. The house has five bedrooms and lies in 130 acres of pasture. Among those who have rented the house are Liam Gallagher and Patsy Kensit. Browns' Cranleigh office is selling the house for £2 million.

ALAN LEVY, the founder of the London Toy Museum and New Cavendish Books, is renting his flat in Stanley Gardens, SW11. The flat is packed with model trains, art books and all kinds of gadgetry. The flat is for rent through Chards' Camden Hill Road office for £1,350 a week.

THE Grade II listed Georgian house of Angela Billingham, Labour MEP for Northamptonshire and Blaby, is for sale. The Ivy House, Adderbury, Oxfordshire, has five bedrooms and a cottage garden and is for sale through Lane Fox for £355,000.

ALAN CLARK's former home at Town Farm House in Bratton Clovelly, Devon, where he lived before becoming an MP, has been auctioned for £167,000 through Knight Frank.

BEN WAKEHAM

Co-ownership scheme set to fail the poor

In April, the Government will change a housebuying scheme that has helped 50,000 people on to the first rung of the property ladder.

Those who qualify for help now, particularly Londoners and those from ethnic minorities, may soon be stuck in rented homes that are unsuitable.

The do-it-yourself shared ownership scheme (DIYSO), a homebuying incentive introduced by the Conservatives, also helps nurses and teachers whose low salaries make them unable to buy on the open market.

It allows a buyer to pay between 25 and 75 per cent of a new home, with a subsidised rent on the rest. If, for example, you took out a mortgage for 50 per cent of the property's value, the lower rent on the rest could in effect make the property 30 per cent cheaper than with a 100 per cent mortgage.

But last summer the Government said DIYSO would be scrapped this year in favour of a new scheme called Homebuy, where buyers would need to pay at least 75 per cent of the cost.

It is effectively an interest-free loan of 25 per cent. Steve Coleman, of the Notting Hill Home Ownership Trust, is in favour, but he believes, it only offers an improved deal to people who are better-off.

Fifty-seven per cent of people who used DIYSO with Notting Hill Home Ownership Trust would not be able to afford Homebuy. Housing associations campaigned for the Government to change its mind and in November, Hilary Armstrong, the Housing Minister, said she would keep DIYSO. But from April it will be financed by local councils rather than the Housing Corporation.

There is no extra money going to the councils and campaigners are worried that next year the scheme, in practice, will be cut, especially in the capital.

Sue Ellenby, the head of the National Housing Federation in London, says: "We were concerned about DIYSO being abolished as it allows people on lower incomes to own homes. The Homebuy scheme is not as accessible, particularly for those in London and the South East where property prices are high."

"Soon local authorities funding DIYSO will be pushed to make difficult decisions with limited funds. At the end of the day we are still arguing about a lack of resources to meet the range and level of need for affordable houses."

Realistically, DIYSO could be extinct in five months and London would be hardest hit.

Steve Nun, of Tower Housing Association, deals with boroughs in southeast London. "Southwark, Bromley and Greenwich are unlikely to earmark much money for DIYSO," he says. "They have other things they would rather spend this money on. As a result, some people will be stuck in the housing trap."

Last year his association helped 250 people to get housed under the

A plan to help low-paid buyers to find cheaper homes may backfire, says Senay Boztas

old government scheme or find accommodation in shared home ownership flats. In the case of apartments, a housing association buys or renovates a complex. Then prospective purchasers usually pay for half of their property and rent the rest. They can gradually buy the whole home, but unlike DIYSO, they cannot make their own choice of homes on the open market.

But even the shared home ownership schemes are not always suitable. In Buckinghamshire, for example, many local people cannot afford to buy property in expensive brownfield developments and new shared home ownership blocks cannot be built on green belt land.

Many projects are overburdened. Last year in London, for every person who found a place, nine were unsuccessful. There were more than 55,000 inquiries for 3,000 properties. Many waiting lists are years long.

Fourteen of the 20 most deprived local authority areas are in the capital. At the same time more than 120,000 households are in severe housing need because of dangers in their current homes, according to a London Pride Partnership survey.

Nick Ronald, the chairman of the London Home Ownership group, says a cake that is already small will have to be even more thinly sliced. Councils will have to split funding between three sorts of housing relief — DIYSO, shared ownership, and the new Homebuy

scheme. "The local authorities are also under pressure to spend their money on urban regeneration and creating sustainable communities," he says. "In West London, where my Bush Housing Association works, I do not think boroughs will fund DIYSO."

"There is going to be a problem here. Since some areas are so expensive, low incomes for London can range from £12,000 to £25,000. There will be people caught in low quality housing and unable to get out."

He says ethnic minorities may be hit particularly hard. Last year these families accounted for 40 per cent of DIYSO users.

Councils may have more cash for housing generally from Labour's capital receipts initiative, letting them use money from the sale of council houses during the Eighties, but this is also used for repairing and building more social housing.

Duncan Bowie, of the London Housing Corporation, says: "For the first time we are leaving it up to councils to decide where to spend their money. Some may well back more renting instead of DIYSO. Early indications suggest fewer councils will use the Homebuy scheme. We are in discussions now to find out."

The future of the scheme is uncertain. It may still be available next year in boroughs such as South Buckinghamshire, but many are worried it will disappear. Penny Sychrava, of the Notting Hill Home Ownership Trust, believes it will be obsolete within two years.

This year's funds are going fast. Even people racing to buy under DIYSO now may be disappointed. Both Tower Housing and Bush associations have stopped advertising because their money has already run out.

For details contact the Shared Ownership Advice Line on 0345 383757.



The DIYSO scheme provided a passport to "desirable" and expensive Pimlico for Marc Lewis

A FOOT ON THE LADDER

MARC LEWIS, a council worker, spent four years lodging with friends before DIYSO helped him to begin buying a home of his own.

The social policy research officer from the London Borough of Barnet earns just over £20,000 a year. But that was not enough for inner London property. Thanks to the DIYSO scheme, he now lives in Pimlico, southwest London, just behind the Tate Gallery.

Mr Lewis, 43, says: "I wanted to live in Pimlico where I was staying with friends. I liked the area, but it is considered 'desirable' — so buying and renting are prohibitively expensive."

He moved into an £85,000 one-bedroom flat in late April, after gaining approval from his housing trust in February.

To buy his flat in the Millbank Estate he took out a mortgage with monthly payments of £460 to buy 60 per cent outright.

Now he pays £108 a month in rent to the Notting Hill Home Ownership Trust and believes this is cheaper than private renting — although his monthly spend has doubled since his days of sharing.

He says: "I was ecstatic when I moved into an area that is safe and pleasant. It has everything. London's attractions are within half an hour's walk. The scheme gets people on to the housing ladder and I would recommend it."

He says DIYSO may not be right for people with special needs or those who do not want a mortgage. He also warns of additional costs — surveyor's and legal fees were higher than he had expected.

"I had the costs budgeted virtually to the penny, but it still cost me more. For someone more financially strapped it could have been disastrous."

A SENSE OF STABILITY

Rupert Procter, a 36-year-old actor, feels very lucky to have benefited from DIYSO. He saw homelessness looming when his sister and her husband — with whom he lodged — wanted to start a family. He tried to move from their Wandsworth home but could not get a mortgage.

"Acting is notoriously unstable," he says. "You can have no work for two months and then a well-paid television job. I was on £16,000 a year and had saved £6,000, but Barclays was still suspicious."

He had nearly given up hope of buying a £69,000 two-bedroom cottage in Tooting when a fellow actor told him about the Notting Hill Home Ownership Trust scheme.

Spending all his savings on a mortgage down-payment with the Nationwide Building Society and

solicitor's fees, Mr Procter got an "unbelievable deal" from the association, which lent him the remaining £34,500, to be paid back at a rate of £120 a month.

With monthly mortgage repayments of £160, he is paying the same as he spent on rent — but now he has a home of his own.

"Getting my own home has been a change for the better without a doubt. It has made my life more complete," he says.

Now, with roles in television programmes, including *Peak Practice*, and earnings of £25,000, he is considering "staircasing": gradually buying a bigger share in the cottage eventually to own it outright.

DIYSO was the starting point, and Mr Procter feels that even contemplating abolishing the scheme is disgusting. He believes it is a way for people to make their lives better.



Actor Rupert Procter is enjoying his new role as homeowner: he now pays the same in mortgage payments as he previously spent on rent

England's late improvement unable to mask inferiority complex against dominant home team

Familiar failings advance cause of new generation

FROM ALAN LEE, CRICKET CORRESPONDENT, IN SYDNEY

WHEN the dismay subsides, along with the briefly inflated hope, England will be left with only the stark realities of this Ashes series. For all their planning and preparation, certain things have scarcely changed. In areas of technique, and across the broad span of cricketers' resources, Australia remain markedly superior.

What England have belatedly achieved here, to the great credit of their coach and captain, is a striking improvement in character under pressure. Adversity now seems to bring out their fight, rather than their fatalism, and there is no disputing that Australia were given a considerable scare over the last two Tests.

Quite why it should take the direst of situations to stir England to such heights, though, is their enduring frustration. Certainly, Alec Stewart, the captain, cannot explain it. "If I could, we'd have done something about it long ago," he said sadly.

Stewart, while proud of his players' resilience in the final fortnight, would wish nobody to be fooled by it. He is aware that until Christmas, when the series began its wholly unexpected finale, England had been woefully second-best and that it was only the fortuitous electric storm of the last afternoon in Brisbane that prevented them from being 3-0 down before the final Test.

Indeed, their last-day performance in Hobart, against an Australian reserve side exhorted to believe they were playing in a sixth Test, was so pitiful that Stewart and David Lloyd, the coach, considered it the worst day of England cricket they have been associated with.

It was that day, and its aftermath both here and in England, that accelerated speculation over the future personnel of team management. It will continue over a period of months, as the initiatives of an England committee now chaired by Brian Bolus become clearer and the idea to appoint a full-time general manager takes shape.

By the end of the calendar year it is possible that the England team will have a new captain and chairman of selectors, too, along with a new coach. That, however, will not

necessarily improve the environment — now unrecognisably unified — or the playing results.

Lord MacLaurin of Knebworth, chairman of the England and Wales Cricket Board, has been in Australia for the heady end-of-series days and made some interesting observations. On the eve of the final Test, he arrived at the Sydney Cricket Ground as the teams were in the nets. He murmured appreciatively about the facilities in Australia before surveying England's Test record and saying: "It's no good us being fifth, sixth or seventh in the world. We have to be in the top two." He is wise enough to know there was a connection.

Every Australian state ground has splendid, off-ground net facilities that mirror conditions in the middle. Most English counties have no proper nets, away from their playing area, so they cannot practise at all while a game is in process. The difference in attitude that this represents is profound and is one good reason Lloyd fancies a shot at coaching an Australian side.

Australian facilities do not end

"pair" for England and Fraser bowled unthreateningly and, eventually, not at all.

Fraser has lost the nip that gave his metronomic accuracy its extra dimension. Ashworth's problems have been partly technique, partly ill-fortune and chiefly a back condition that is recurring with ever more frequency.

Graham Thorpe's departure for home, after only two Tests, was a dreadful blow for England. He, too, has long-term back trouble that does not bode well in the maelstrom of international cricket.

There are several others for whom this has been a disillusioning tour. John Crawley, Robert Croft and Dominic Cork among them. Ben Hollis, justifiably chosen as an all-rounder of potential, has regressed, but Alex Tudor, the wild card, has the makings of an impressive cricketer if his suspect body stands up to the strain.

Certain problems characteristic of all recent England teams remain as great as ever. The bowling of spin is in crisis; it must be if Ashley Giles was the best that could be produced from the hat to rival Australia's introduction of Shane Warne.

Wicketkeeping is in a scarcely healthier state. If Stewart's latest switch back to opening is to be sustained, Chris Read, the A team wicketkeeper from Nottinghamshire, may play Test cricket before the end of summer.

But there were some shining positives from this tour, four of them in particular. Nasser Hussain and Mark Ramprakash batted with conviction and consistency. Darren Gough has never bowled better or faster and Dean Headley, having looked as if the series would pass him by, took 19 wickets in the last three Tests.

Gough was the talisman, his beaming face and bursting biceps the measure of English pride, but the progress of Hussain and Ramprakash may be more significant. Late maturation — almost contemporary of Ashworth yet somehow seeming years younger — they may at last have the self-esteem, and the confidence of others, to be seriously considered when the captaincy becomes vacant.



Taylor holds up the Ashes trophy after Australia had beaten England in Sydney to secure the series 3-1. Photograph: Clive Mason/Allsport

Taylor triumphs in the long run

Mark Taylor wore his baggy green cap on the final day of this last Test, and he wore it for a purpose. The sands of time are shifting for Taylor, who may refashion the Australian captaincy after the forthcoming tour of West Indies, and, as he said, if it was to be his last Test on native soil: "I wanted to make sure I was wearing the right outfit."

"Doing things right" is the phrase that best describes Taylor's leadership of a side that has become, under his stewardship, the strongest and most accomplished in the world. Whoever succeeds him later this year will have a splendid bequest. There is quality, depth and balance, but it has taken a clear-sighted and independent captain to release its full potential.

He has lost only two rubbers, in Pakistan and India, where the locals can be hard to conquer on slow, turning pitches. His 26 winning Tests include series victories, home and away, against England, South Africa, West Indies and Pakistan. In that time Australia have become the dominant modern side, skilful, resilient and appealing to watch, not least because Taylor has sought to win every game.

In his address to the crowd after the match, Taylor said he hoped to see them all again next year. It was

Michael Henderson salutes the Australia captain, who has become one of the greats

an oblique comment on which he declined to elaborate, except to say: "I said the same thing last year." However, nobody doubted that this was his farewell in Australia, and he goes out as a six-times winner against England, thrice as plain master, thrice as captain.

He took his leave with the dignity and modesty that one expects from him. On the field he does the right things, handling his men with skill. Off the field he says the right things, which is not as easy as it sounds. Michael Ashworth, an intelligent man who knew he had to show a more sympathetic face to the world, could not do it.

Taylor is equally adept at fielding awkward questions. Even during that dreadful run of form two years ago, when he could not buy a run, and critics demanded his head, he never howled — not in public, at any rate. As captain he bats for his side; he also bats for the game.

He has been lucky, that much is true. Successful leaders often are. Since a poor first Test as captain in Pakistan five years ago, when he made a pair and Australia lost a classic battle by one wicket, he has

been blessed. Five winning tosses this series is not an insignificant fact. But he has made his luck, and has taken advantage of those favourable moments, being bold when boldness was required, and shrewd when it was wise not to declare his hand.

He is modest, yes, but that does not mean he underplays his own efforts. This is a man who has made 7,500 runs in Test matches going in first, and not many Test openers manage that. He has now held more catches than anybody in the history of Test cricket and he pointed out that he set the record with a good one, low down off McGrath.

To say that Taylor has enjoyed his cricket against England is hardly to gild the lily. Six of his 19 Test hundreds have come against them, five in England, including that career-saving 129 at Edgbaston two years ago when another failure would have compelled him to stand down. Players in dressing-rooms all over England, watching his innings that day, joined in the applause when he reached his hundred. That is how Taylor is regarded among his own, as a player's player and a man's man.

Though the end is approaching for him, and one or two others, he does not worry about the team. "It depends on how well we can fill the holes," he said, "but we have the players to do it. We are producing some very good cricketers. Whether they are of the same Test hardness, only time will tell."

Steve Waugh, the senior member of the Test team, will resume his leadership of the one-day side for the forthcoming triangular competition — although he will miss the first two games because of a slight hamstring tear — and he will captain Australia in the World Cup. But when the Test baton changes hands, Taylor expects Shane Warne to be in a position to receive it. Despite the recent brouhaha linking Warne with an Indian bookmaker, Taylor said: "I still see him as one of the candidates."

Taylor made an unlikely candidate when he presented his international credentials ten years ago. He did not hit the ball like other, more obviously gifted batsmen. In fact, he did not look an athlete at all, being tubby and slow. But the race is not always to the swift, and Taylor has proved himself the most sure-footed of men. In the ranks of modern captains, those since the war, he is among the best.

FINAL SYDNEY SCOREBOARD

Australia won toss			
AUSTRALIA First Innings			
*M A Taylor c Hick b Headley	131	(30min, 8 balls)	
M J Slater c Hogg b Headley	18	(20min, 25 balls, 2 runs)	
J L Langer	28	(30min, 25 balls, 2 runs)	
M E Waugh c Hogg b Headley	121	(24min, 20 balls, 10 runs)	
S R Waugh b Such	36	(20min, 17 balls, 10 runs)	
D S Lehmann c Hussain b Tudor	32	(40min, 37 balls, 5 runs)	
T A Healy c Hogg b Gough	14	(20min, 28 balls, 1 run)	
S K Warne not out	0	(10min, 7 balls)	
S C G MacGill c Gough	0	(20min, 25 balls, 1 run)	
C R Miller b Gough	0	(10min, 7 balls)	
G D McGrath c Slater b Headley	0	(20min, 25 balls, 1 run)	
Extras (2 n.b., 2 lb)	11		
Total (37.3 overs, 375min)	222		
ENGLAND First Innings			
*M A Taylor c Hogg b Headley	131	(30min, 8 balls)	
M J Slater c Hogg b Headley	18	(20min, 25 balls, 2 runs)	
J L Langer	28	(30min, 25 balls, 2 runs)	
M E Waugh c Hogg b Headley	121	(24min, 20 balls, 10 runs)	
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Extras (2 n.b., 2 lb)	11		
Total (37.3 overs, 375min)	222		
AUSTRALIA Second Innings			
*M A Taylor c Hick b Headley	131	(30min, 8 balls)	
M J Slater c Hogg b Headley	18	(20min, 25 balls, 2 runs)	
J L Langer	28	(30min, 25 balls, 2 runs)	
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Extras (2 n.b., 2 lb)	11		
Total (37.3 overs, 375min)	222		

SERIES AVERAGES

England			
Batting	M	NO	Runs
M A Taylor	5	0	270
M J Slater	5	0	88
J L Langer	5	0	107
M E Waugh	5	0	258
S R Waugh	5	0	107
D S Lehmann	5	0	116
T A Healy	5	0	116
S K Warne	5	0	116
S C G MacGill	5	0	116
C R Miller	5	0	116
G D McGrath	5	0	116
Extras	5	0	116
Australia			
Batting	M	NO	Runs
M A Taylor	5	0	270
M J Slater	5	0	88
J L Langer	5	0	107
M E Waugh	5	0	258
S R Waugh	5	0	107
D S Lehmann	5	0	116
T A Healy	5	0	116
S K Warne	5	0	116
S C G MacGill	5	0	116
C R Miller	5	0	116
G D McGrath	5	0	116
Extras	5	0	116

McMillan shuts door on India

BY OUR SPORTS STAFF

HAMILTON (fourth day of five): New Zealand, with four second-innings wickets in hand, are 273 runs ahead of India.

CRAIG McMillan and Adam Parore put New Zealand in command of the third and final Test of the series against India yesterday. Their 140-run partnership for the end of the fourth day, giving them a lead of 273, put the match almost beyond India and a draw would give New Zealand the series 1-0.

New Zealand scored only 44 runs in the two hours before lunch and, in the process, lost four wickets. McMillan and Parore, however, occupied the crease throughout the second session to completely alter the course of the innings.

McMillan drove with power and punished anything short. He faced 102 balls and hit 13 fours on his way to making 84. Parore was content to play second fiddle, his half-century arriving off 120 balls and including six boundaries.

McMillan and Parore eventually departed in quick succession, but Chris Cairns and Dion Nash carried on the good work by adding 98 in the last 28 overs. The second new ball failed to restrain them as the Indian bowling fell away.

NEW ZEALAND First Innings 336 (CJ D. McMillan 84, R G. Parore 87, M J. Horne 60, S. Smith 53, 38.5)

Second Innings

M J. Horne c Tendulkar b Singh 22

M J. Horne c Tendulkar b Singh 22

R G. Parore c Tendulkar b Singh 44

C D. McMillan c Tendulkar b Singh 84

M A. C. Parsons c Singh b Ramdas 52

C J. Nash not out

Extras (2 n.b., 1 lb) 11

Total (35.5 overs, 355min) 336

SHEEHAN on BRIDGE

BY ROBERT SHEEHAN, BRIDGE CORRESPONDENT

Brian Jackson, an experienced rubber bridge performer, showed me this unusual hold-up play.

Dealer North		Love all		Rubber	
Bridge		Love all		Rubber	
♠ J10765 ♥ A3 ♦ 94 ♣ 1085		♠ K4 ♥ Q ♦ Q763 ♣ AKJ642		♠ A2 ♥ 1088765 ♦ A1085 ♣ 3	
W N S E		W N S E		W N S E	
♠ Q83 ♥ KJ42 ♦ KJ2 ♣ Q87		♠ Q83 ♥ KJ42 ♦ KJ2 ♣ Q87		♠ Q83 ♥ KJ42 ♦ KJ2 ♣ Q87	

Contract: Three No-Trumps Doubled, by South. Lead: Jack of spades.

I don't think West should bid over One Heart. One Spade has no pre-emptive effect in this sequence, and if North becomes the declarer in a suit contract it may result in East giving away a trick on the opening lead. Make West's hand AJ10976 and nothing else, and One Spade is a sound overall.

When North-South reach Three No-Trumps, I think it is wrong for East to double. He has no great surprises for declarer, and although the double encourages a spade lead, most of the time West would do that anyway.

At the table declarer put the king of spades on the jack, so East-West were able to clear the spades and declarer was restricted to six tricks in clubs and a spade. But after East's double declarer should have realised he had two aces. Then playing the king of spades at trick

one was never going to be the winning play — if it held the trick, East would later get in to play a spade through declarer's queen.

Try the effect of ducking the jack of spades in both hands. If West has AJ10976, that cuts the communications. It also cuts the communication when East has Ax of spades. The only time it fails is when West has only five spades, and in that case declarer was never going to make his contract anyway.

In the play-off to aid selection of the next British open team, Collings (John Collings, Martin Jones, Gary Hyatt, Alan Mould, Stuart and Gerald Tredinnick) beat Hackett (Paul, Jason and Justin Hackett, Tony Forrester, Tom Townsend, David Mossop) by 18 IMPs. The selectors have not yet made a decision.

KEENE on CHESS

BY RAYMOND KEENE, CHESS CORRESPONDENT

Sokolov leads

Ivan Sokolov maintained his lead at Hastings with a draw in the sixth round, since his main rival, Matthew Sadler, faltered and lost to James Plaskett. Sergei Shipov, the early leader, regained some lost ground by defeating Mikhail Saltaev.

White: James Plaskett
Black: Mikhail Saltaev
Hastings Premier 1999

King's Indian Defence

4	Ba07+	Nu07	8	Re0
5	O-0	e6	9	Ba0
6	Qe2	Ng6	10	Bg3
7	b3	Be7	11	Bg3
8	Ba2	O-0	12	Ng7
9	a4	c4	13	Be7
10	a4	e5	14	Re1
11	Nxd4	Qb6	15	Re1
12	Kh1	Qc5	16	Ba4
13	Nd2	Qh5	17	Ba4
14	f3	Rf8	18	Ng6
15	Qg4	Qg5	19	Ng6
16	Rg1	Ne5	20	Ne7
17	Rar1	Ng5	21	Ne7
18	Qe3	Nf4	22	Ne7
19	Qe3	Nd7	23	Ne7
20	Nf5	Bf3	24	Ne7
21	Rf1	Bb5	25	Ne7
22	Nd6	b5	26	Ne7
23	Nd6	Ba6	27	Ne7
24	Ra6	Nf8	28	Ne7
25	c5	NRe6	29	Ne7
26	Nc3	Nh3	30	Ne7
27	Qg5	Nfng5	31	Ne7
28	c6	Nd3	32	Ne7
29	Rd1	Ra4	33	Ne7
30	Nd5	Nf8	34	Ne7
31	Ba4	Re4	35	Ne7
32	Rd7	Ra7	36	Ne7
33	Nc7+	Ra7	37	Ne7
34	Ra7	h5	38	Ne7
35	gth5	Rd6	39	Ne7
36	Rd7	d3	40	Ne7
37	Rd7	Black resigns	41	Ne7

RUGBY UNION

Wasps aim to get title challenge back on course

BY DAVID HANDS, RUGBY CORRESPONDENT

THREE of the best-known clubs in London rugby are vying for supremacy in the capital at the halfway stage of the Allied Dunbar Premiership — nor can any of them be discounted as potential winners of the first division. For the time being, however, neither Saracens, Wasps nor Harlequins will look much further than the next game.

At the weekend Wasps and Saracens changed places in the table, thanks to the unexpected defeat Wasps suffered at the hands of West Harlequins in the black North East.

They can reverse that situation when they entertain Saracens at Loftus Road this evening and, if there was any hint of complacency among Wasps at the weekend, there will be none now. "West Harlequins played particularly well and we played particularly badly," Nigel Melville, director of rugby at Wasps, said.

"It shows you can't afford to have a poor game in this league and I have no doubt that West will do the same to other teams before this season is through. But I don't have any problem about the big games, about players raising themselves for the occasion."

Wasps stood as firm as any when they went to Vicarage Road in October. They came away with a 31-17 win in a game which — allied to their wayward display against Harlequins nine days earlier — caused Saracens far more doubt about their immediate future than September had suggested they should have.

Moreover, Saracens remain without Francois Pienaar, their captain-coach, whose foot injury keeps him out. However, Alain Penaud

returns at fly half, having come through a fitness test yesterday on his "dead leg". That will be a considerable relief to Gavin Johnson, who returns to his natural position of full back, from which he scored an injury-time try against Wasps ten weeks ago.

Wasps have moved Lawrence Dallaglio, the England captain, from blind-side flanker to No 8, a position that he frequently occupies in the national side, whatever the number on his back may say. That allows the inclusion of Eben Rolitt, who has been in good form of late.

"Where we play Lawrence depends upon whom he is playing with," Melville said. "We are very pleased with Eben and we have Joe Worsley on the bench, who can act as an impact player."

Andy Reed is preferred to Simon Shaw at lock. Simon Mitchell and Darren Molloy rejoining the front row.

Mitchell is set for a decent run at hooker as Trevor Leota, the stalwart Samoan, is likely to be missing for three weeks after damaging a knee against Gloucester. Paul Sampson, who won such plaudits for the decisive try against Gloucester, gives way on the wing to Shane Roiser.

Gloucester have a problem to resolve with David Sims, their captain, who has been omitted from the first XV since mid-November. Sims, 29, has been overshadowed by Mark Cornwell, while Rob Fidler, his fellow lock, has been leading the side.

Sims has been linked with Cardiff and Bristol but has 18 months of his contract remaining and Richard Hill, the director of rugby, is keen not to lose one of his forward assets.

"We would like Dave to stay at the club and fight for his place," Hill said.



Gillett, of England, watched by McMahon, of Australia, rolls the jack during their first-round pairs match yesterday

Schuback keeps his nerve

A SUPERB take-out from Ian Schuback, who is regarded by bowls enthusiasts as a sort of Crocodile Dundee, turned almost certain defeat into a 7-4, 7-3, 4-1, 2-7, 7-6 victory for him and his fellow Australian, Ian Taylor, in the first round of the world indoor pairs championship at Potters Leisure Resort on the Norfolk coast yesterday.

Having won the first two sets, Taylor and Schuback were pegged back by Rowan Brassey, of New Zealand, and Steve Glasson, of Australia, who won the next two and looked the likely winners when they led 6-5 in the decider.

On what turned out to be the last end, Brassey set up a match lie, but Taylor, the man with the impossibly complicated delivery, trailed the jack expertly to a back position, and settled down approximately 18 inches in front of the little white ball. Glasson, ranked No 1 in

David Rhys Jones watches one of the most endearing characters in bowls upstage Australia's No 1

Australia, drew beautifully to restore the match lie, but Schuback, like a master marksman, ruthlessly struck the shot off the rink. Glasson, surprisingly unable to repeat the accuracy of the first bowl, then finished two yards short. Already holding one shot, Schuback was left with the easiest task of drawing the winner. "Anywhere within two yards would have done," he said. "If I'd missed that, I'd have been looking for a rope to hang myself."

Earlier, Schuback, always a favourite with the Guild Hall crowd at Preston, and now the darling of Potters, produced an astonishing conversion shot to win the first set, when the scores were level at 4-4. Brassey and Glasson

held a set lie, with three good shots near the jack, when a Schuback bullseye removed all three red-disc bowls and left three yellow-disc bowls in a scoring position.

Five bowlers from the southern hemisphere participated yesterday. In the first match, Mark McMahon, who lives and works in Sydney, partnered David Gourlay, of Scotland, into the quarter-finals.

McMahon lends a cosmopolitan dimension to the arena: born in Dunfermline, he played bowls internationally for Hong Kong. He gave Gourlay a good start, matching and often beating Les Gillett, *The Times*/Taylor English Bowler of the Year in 1998, to the jack.

Robert Newman, Gillett's skip, who will be 24 next month, played well enough to suggest he will be a force to be reckoned with in future, and the match looked destined to go the full distance.

The English pair won the first set by the narrowest of margins, and, although they lost the next two, they appeared comfortable in the fourth, only to concede two successive doubles and allow the No 5 seeds to ease through, 6-7, 7-5, 7-4, 7-4.

"We played two loose ends, and paid the penalty," Newman, who reached the quarter-finals of the world indoor singles championship last year, said. "It's especially important to be consistent in two-bowl pairs, and they were more consistent than us — particularly towards the end of each set."

FIRST ROUNDS McMahon (Aus) and D'Gourlay (Scot) to L Gillett and R Newman (Eng) 6-7, 7-5, 7-4, 7-4; Taylor and Schuback (Aus) to R Brassey (NZ) and S Glasson (Aus) 7-4, 7-3, 4-1, 2-7, 7-6.

SPORT IN BRIEF

Gateshead choose Walters as captain

RUGBY LEAGUE: Kerrid Walters, 31, the former Australia hooker, was yesterday named captain of the new Gateshead Thunder club, whose first competitive game is against Leeds Rhinos at Gateshead International Stadium in the JJB Super League, on March 7. Walters was in the second wave of imported players who arrived from Australia on New Year's Day. Work permits are still awaited for the last two Australian players to be signed, Brett Green, a forward, and Brett Grogan, a centre. Sheffield Eagles, who failed with two earlier attempts to sign Paul Anderson, 21, from St Helens, have agreed to pay the £10,000 asking price for the utility player.

CRICKET: Somerset have appointed Jamie Cox, the Tasmanian batsman, as their captain and overseas player for next season. Cox has been the Tasmania vice-captain under David Boon's leadership for the past three seasons. Peter Anderson, Somerset's chief executive, said: "We were looking for a proven top-order batsman with captaincy ability who would be available for the whole season. We believe we have found such a player."

SQUASH: Two exceptional players emerged from the semi-finals of the CGU British junior open championships at Abbeydale Park in Sheffield yesterday. James Willstrop, a 6ft 3in 15-year-old from Pontefract, defeated Alberto Manso, of Spain, 1-9, 9-5, 9-3, 9-1 in the semi-final of the boys' under-17 championship while Omar Refaat, 14, from Egypt, defeated Dylan Bennett, of Holland, 9-2, 9-4, 9-3 in the boys' under-15 championship.

SATURDAY. ANYTHING BUT A DAY OF REST.

SPORT
Vision
WEEKEND
metro
the times
magazine
meg@

THE TIMES

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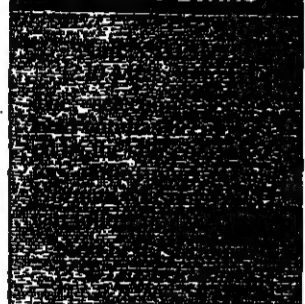
Phantom sales haunt breeders

By CHRIS McGRATH

A SKELETON in the cupboard of commercial breeding was dragged into the open yesterday, though it would probably be more accurately described as a phantom. Nigel Elwes, chairman of the TBA, used its annual general meeting in London to draw attention to the mass of undisclosed "vendor purchases" at public yearling auctions — which shadowy practice lurks, in his estimation, behind as many as 20 per cent of sales.

It is common knowledge in the bloodstock world that some top vendors enlist satellite interests or agents to inflate the value of yearlings, especially those by a new stallion for whom they wish to create a vogue. Setting a trend will have paid for itself by the time the young horse in question resurfaces to race under its breeder's own umbrella.

RICHARD EVANS



Since these phantom sales are particularly potent at the elite end of the market, Elwes clearly believes that they tend to veer of fake gold — as well as coating a corresponding layer of grime over its integrity.

"The practice of vendors buying back their own horses without disclosing it is most unsatisfactory, particularly as it sends totally the wrong message about the real financial health of the market," he said. "It is illegal in the art market but, unfortunately, it is now common practice, encouraged by the introduction of sales races." (These, lavishly supported by the sponsoring sales company, are restricted to graduates of a particular auction.)

He added: "When this practice is used to boost the value of offspring of stallions, many of which are foreign-owned, it has to say, 'I'm unhappy'."



DANOLI, above, will be joining the Irish pilgrimage to Cheltenham this year. The popular 11-year-old has been dogged by injury, but will be among the entries for the Tote Gold Cup at today's noon deadline.

Tom Foley, his trainer, is confident that his charge will be fit to take his place alongside a glittering array of stars, led by the King George VI Chase winner, Testion Mill, and Florida Pearl in the blue riband event on March 17.

"We've entered him and he'll definitely be there," Foley said. "It's something I'm looking forward to."

Danoli shot to fame when securing victory in the Sun Alliance Novices' Hurdle at the 1994 Cheltenham Festival. But he sustained a serious leg injury when winning the Marcell Amree Hurdle in 1995, and problems since then have made him difficult to train. But Foley reported: "So far so good with him. He's been ridden out for the last nine days and is fine. The plan is now to go for the Hennessy Cognac

Gold Cup at Leopardstown next month and then on to Cheltenham."

Foley believes that Florida Pearl — another likely participant in next month's Hennessy — is the horse to beat at Cheltenham. "He made a silly mistake when he came down last time at Leopardstown and still has a point to prove, but he's still the one as far as I am concerned," he said. "Testion Mill looked good at Kempton, but I would question the form of some of the horses that finished behind him."

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MUSSELBURGH

THUNDERER
12.40 FINISTERRE (rap), 1.10 Rallegio, 1.40 Mr Cavallo, 2.10 Marble Man, 2.40 Pontevedra, 3.10 Owens Quest, 3.40 Nolimover.

SIS

12.40 PRESTON TOWER MAIDEN HURDLE

(2,402: 2m) (15 runners)
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FOOTBALL

Money-men hound Bassett out of office

Rob Hughes says firing the Forest manager is easier than replacing him

FIRING Dave Bassett is in the first week of January in skin to the director of a poorhouse because the children appear less well-nourished, less sure of their social standing, than royalty.

It is bleak midwinter by the Trent. Supporters are understandably deeply unhappy with a team that has gone 17 FA Cuping Premiership matches without a win and succumbed to struggling Portsmouth in the FA Cup. But, in

relatively speaking, in the poverty trap of the highest-spending league in the world, Bassett has proven many times that he is a second-half man in that, come the latter part of the season, he will play to Houdini acts. He did it with Sheffield United and Wimbledon, he figured in six promotions and countless acts of brinkmanship against relegation. He is the eternal shoe-string manager.

He might, at 54, have exhausted the remarkable passions that his career has demonstrated, but surely Nigel Wray, chairman of the club, and Irving Scholar, the director of football, are not the men to judge his energy levels. They are absentee landlords. Wray more involved with Saracens rugby club, Scholar a resident of Monaco.

Over the years Bassett has shown himself to be one of the most honest and ebullient managers. An England amateur international, his forte became making professional players more professional, and anyone who witnessed him on the Sheffield United training ground, breathing conviction into indifferent footballers, knows that it is easier to sack him than replace him.

Of course, the paltry crowd of barely 10,000 at the City Ground on Saturday vented their wrath on the manager. Some of those fans had known the achievements of Brian Clough, who brought to them the European Cup in successive seasons. Living up to



Bassett manages a smile for journalists just before his departure from the City Ground

Clough's legacy was, and is, beyond Nottingham Forest. Frank Clark, his prodigy, flitted with it, failed and left. Bassett, bringing Forest up from the first division last summer, must have known instantly that they had not paid the price of admission to the Premiership. Rather than improve the team, Bassett returned from holiday to find that the club, the p.c. had sold Kevin Campbell to Trabzonspor, of Turkey.

That split a partnership between Campbell and Pierre van Hooijdonk which had netted 52 of Forest's 82 league goals in the lower division. Van Hooijdonk, abjectly unprofessional, simply withdrew

his labour. Maybe he was justified in asserting that Forest lacked the ambition to stay in the top flight, but his action destroyed team morale and began there and then to destroy the work of Bassett.

Yet still the club sold, allowing Colin Cooper to return to Middlesbrough, thus weakening their defence. To say that Bassett attempted to replace those players with inferior men is like sending out into the market a man with holes in his purse and expecting him to bring home pearls.

Dave Bassett, in the past, could do it. Peter Reid, with Sunderland, can do it. But there are very, very few who, by dint of their own personali-

ty, their almost inexhaustible passion, can keep raising teams to be greater than the sum of their parts. Rumour has it that Ron Atkinson is next for the job. The fans crave the return of Stuart Pearce. Who knows, the absentee landlords may even bring on Clough... that is Nigel Clough, not, alas, the original. Dismissing the manager when all around the club is sinking is the roulette-wheel course of the desperate club proprietor. It is easier than accepting that somebody has to be the loser and that the ever-increasing gap in English football predetermines that, nine times out of ten, it is the promoted sides.

HARRY'S GAME

1944: Born September 4 in Wembley
1972: Captains Walton & Hargrave to victory in Amateur Cup final against Slough
1974: Joins Wimbledon, then in Southern League
1981: Succeeded Dave Crack as manager of Wimbledon, now in third division
1983-84: Fourth division side follows relegation to become Crystal Palace manager but changes his mind within a week and stays at Pough Lane
1986: Wins promotion to old first division
1987-88: Joins Watford but within half a season moves to Sheffield United
1989-90: Succeeded promoters take United back into first division
1994: Relegated from Premier League
1995: Leaves Watford Lane on December 12 by mutual agreement
1996: Joins Crystal Palace as manager
1997: Resigns to become general manager of Nottingham Forest and later manager

reality, they are not facing up to the fact that their club was not only attempting to live beyond its means, but also that the p.c. was expecting to make a profit from it.

That is the wider fool's game that has engulfed the Premiership, where less than a handful of mega-rich clubs are drawing away from the others and the remainder are

TODAY'S FIXTURES

FOOTBALL
Kick-off 7.30 unless stated
Auto Wideness: Sheffield Wednesday vs. Queens Park Rangers
Second round
Southampton v. Cardiff
Tottenham vs. Southampton
Second-round replay
Cardiff v. Southampton (8.0)
THE TIMES FA YOUTH CUP: Second-round replay: Rotherham v. Barnsley
Third round: Barnsley v. Rotherham
Fourth round: Barnsley v. Rotherham
Fifth round: Barnsley v. Rotherham
Sixth round: Barnsley v. Rotherham
Seventh round: Barnsley v. Rotherham
Eighth round: Barnsley v. Rotherham
Ninth round: Barnsley v. Rotherham
Tenth round: Barnsley v. Rotherham
Eleventh round: Barnsley v. Rotherham
Twelfth round: Barnsley v. Rotherham
Thirteenth round: Barnsley v. Rotherham
Fourteenth round: Barnsley v. Rotherham
Fifteenth round: Barnsley v. Rotherham
Sixteenth round: Barnsley v. Rotherham
Seventeenth round: Barnsley v. Rotherham
Eighteenth round: Barnsley v. Rotherham
Nineteenth round: Barnsley v. Rotherham
Twentieth round: Barnsley v. Rotherham
Twenty-first round: Barnsley v. Rotherham
Twenty-second round: Barnsley v. Rotherham
Twenty-third round: Barnsley v. Rotherham
Twenty-fourth round: Barnsley v. Rotherham
Twenty-fifth round: Barnsley v. Rotherham
Twenty-sixth round: Barnsley v. Rotherham
Twenty-seventh round: Barnsley v. Rotherham
Twenty-eighth round: Barnsley v. Rotherham
Twenty-ninth round: Barnsley v. Rotherham
Thirtieth round: Barnsley v. Rotherham

ICE HOCKEY

NATIONAL LEAGUE (NHL): Nashville 2, Anaheim 1; Boston 3, Calgary 1; Carolina 4, Ottawa 1; New York Rangers 4, St. Louis 1; Toronto 3, Tampa Bay 1 (OT); St. Louis 4, Vancouver 1; Colorado 4, Montreal 3.

MOTOR RALLYING

MOROCCO: Dakar rally: Peugeot 406, stage 10 (Marrakech to Agadir) 1st Peugeot 406, 2nd Peugeot 406, 3rd Peugeot 406, 4th Peugeot 406, 5th Peugeot 406, 6th Peugeot 406, 7th Peugeot 406, 8th Peugeot 406, 9th Peugeot 406, 10th Peugeot 406, 11th Peugeot 406, 12th Peugeot 406, 13th Peugeot 406, 14th Peugeot 406, 15th Peugeot 406, 16th Peugeot 406, 17th Peugeot 406, 18th Peugeot 406, 19th Peugeot 406, 20th Peugeot 406, 21st Peugeot 406, 22nd Peugeot 406, 23rd Peugeot 406, 24th Peugeot 406, 25th Peugeot 406, 26th Peugeot 406, 27th Peugeot 406, 28th Peugeot 406, 29th Peugeot 406, 30th Peugeot 406, 31st Peugeot 406, 32nd Peugeot 406, 33rd Peugeot 406, 34th Peugeot 406, 35th Peugeot 406, 36th Peugeot 406, 37th Peugeot 406, 38th Peugeot 406, 39th Peugeot 406, 40th Peugeot 406, 41st Peugeot 406, 42nd Peugeot 406, 43rd Peugeot 406, 44th Peugeot 406, 45th Peugeot 406, 46th Peugeot 406, 47th Peugeot 406, 48th Peugeot 406, 49th Peugeot 406, 50th Peugeot 406, 51st Peugeot 406, 52nd Peugeot 406, 53rd 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Garnished with a balcony and sea view

Why did Padstow's most famous chef travel all the way to Naples to kick off his new cookery series, Rick Stein's *Seafood Odyssey* (BBC2)? Because that way he could be sure of laying his hands on that key ingredient needed to cook successfully: even the most simple dishes abroad: a large balcony that looks out over a spectacular view. Antonio Carluccio did it, also in Italy (though he occasionally had to improvise by cooking on a hillside). Ken Hom did it, still-trying his scallops at home in California. Now Rick's done it. You can feel pretty confident that if a country doesn't have the sort of architecture that accommodates balconies, then its cuisine doesn't amount to a hill of beans in this crazy world of television cookery. Della Smith made a half-hearted stab at it in her recent series by having a new kitchen specially built in her glass-walled conservatory: it afforded leafy views

over the countryside beyond, but it just wasn't the same. Not that Rick actually travelled to the Naples we ourselves see when we get off the plane. He was in a mysterious Naples which had no 16-year-olds avoiding traffic jams by driving their Vespas along the pavement, or people looking for horses' heads they could slip into their enemies' beds. In Rick's Naples, the men behaved like extras in a Fellini movie, and the women all talked like Sophia Loren. "This is like making love," purred Giovanna Raffone, a Neapolitan explaining the depth of her passion for food. "Making love is not just physical sex. It's love for everything, the flowers, the sea. Love for cooking is part of all that."

This is, in fact, exactly why Rick chose to begin his odyssey in Naples, because it's a city where life revolves around food. People are brought up on the simple things. They have a focus on ingredients and care about them. Italy is about passion and flavours. They couldn't give a stuff about co-riander and lemongrass. They just want to know where the best tomatoes and lemons come from. In this, Rick pinpointed one of the glories of Italian food: Italians have been cooking these dishes for centuries and have reached the conclusion that if they could be improved by adding galingal and coconut milk, then someone would have done it by now. Critics might call this attitude insular. Fans rejoice for it.

REVIEW



Joe Joseph

Yet in his quest for simplicity, Rick experiences erratic and alarming mood swings: one moment he's a gentle soul, rhapsodising romantically about tomatoes; the next he ignites like a chip-pan fire, inveighing against "flam-bam garnishes" and "bits of whatnot on the top" and the next he's reciting emotionally

makers come along at once. Don Boyd's *Fed Frontal* in *Flop Flops* (ITV) lost some of its punch compared to Channel 4's documentary, which covered similar ground (bleh?). It was another swamp at a bunch of people you won't be seeing riling enthusiastically through the clothes racks in the January sales. But what it lost in punch it made up for in punch — Boyd's punch — as we watched the director struggle entertainingly with the dilemma of whether or not to sue his subjects and go naked at Sue and Dave's wedding reception along with the guests. Any thought that the naked option might have been his way of saving money on hiring a morning coat at Moss Bros was soon dispelled when Boyd took to the nudist lifestyle with all the passion of the newly liberated convert. Once he'd taken the plunge, it was hard for Boyd to keep his genitals out of camera shot. But Boyd also took

the trouble to point out that nudism is not just about a group of people who feel persecuted by society because they find clothes restrictive. He interviewed James Scarlett, who was raised by Customs after they'd intercepted a naturist video showing a French holiday camp, in which children were frolicking naked. Scarlett eventually won his case. But what was intriguing about this episode was not that it made you wonder why anybody would want to watch a video of a French holiday camp, it was the startling advocacy skills of Scarlett's lawyer, who told Boyd that: "You cannot possibly take items like this and take them to the market and all of a sudden paedophilia as a problem will disappear. As a lawyer I have occasionally had to deal with cases of bestiality that doesn't mean to say that you shouldn't be allowed to take

photographs of sheep." It's certainly a bewitching argument, especially if you've had a lot to drink. Launching a new series of *Great Railway Journeys* (BBC2), Ian Hislop travelled mostly hopefully across India, the East and the West, somehow pulling off the trick of doing many of the travelogue things you see television visitors do in India but making them seem fresh. Maybe Hislop's engaging and observant journey will do for Indian tourism what Della did for such familiar staples as eggs and omelette pans, and we'll all find ourselves booking holidays on the enticing "palace on wheels" from Jaipur to Jodhpur this year. But as he hung, sweating, from the strap of one of Calcutta's new subway trains, Hislop — packed in as snug as a cigarette in a new pack of Marlboros — told us: "You don't really go to India. You get in it." Still, at least they weren't all naked, too.

- BBC1**
- 6.00am Business Breakfast (41254)
 - 7.00am BBC Breakfast News (7) (87983)
 - 9.00am Kilroy (7) (836781)
 - 9.45am The Vanessa Show (7) (5306631)
 - 10.55am News: Weather (7) (7275525)
 - 11.00am Real Rooms (728502)
 - 11.25am Can't Cook, Won't Cook (7) (7255761)
 - 11.55am News: Weather (7) (1488457)
 - 12.00pm Call My Bluff (58322)
 - 12.30am Battered Dogs' Home (83908)
 - 1.00pm O'Clock News (7) (80070)
 - 1.30pm Regional News: Weather (8889761)
 - 1.40pm Neighbours Lou, Midge and Harold continue feuding (7) (6655687)
 - 2.05pm Inside A television unwittingly becomes involved in narcotics dealing. With Raymond Burr (7) (7932051)
 - 2.55pm Going for a Song (8834506)
 - 3.20pm The Weather Show Weather stories and reports (7) (2265457)
 - 3.25pm Children's BBC Playdays (8873326)
 - 3.45pm Little Monsters (8350457)
 - 3.50pm Chucklevision (8367419) 4.10pm See It Saw It (7) (111111)
 - 4.35pm The Wild World (1997) (833)
 - 5.00pm News: Weather (7) (739322)
 - 5.10pm Blue Peter (8878877)
 - 5.35pm Neighbours (7) (788264)
 - 6.00pm O'Clock News: Weather (7) (159)
 - 6.30pm Regional News: Weather (821)
 - 7.00pm Money for Old Rope Johnathan Maitland offers tips on making the most of financial investments (7) (1308)
 - 7.30pm Dream House New series. Carol Vorderman and a team of experts attempt to build a dream house for the 21st century (7) (236)
 - 8.00pm Changing Rooms New series. The team come to the rescue of four neighbours whose kitchens are badly in need of a revamp (7) (889)
 - 8.30pm Battered Dogs' Home Shaula Lowy introduces the first of a series of highlights from the daytime documentary. The comedian Sean Hughes visits the shelter to choose a companion for his dog Bill (7) (81018)
 - 8.50pm National Lottery: Amazing Luck Stories. Musician David Curtis celebrates an unexpected success (7) (838877)
 - 9.00pm Nine O'Clock News: Regional News: Weather (7) (6167)
 - 9.30pm The X-Files A computer program with its own reasoning and conscience destroys its creator and plans further destruction (7) (75034)
 - 10.15pm Jobs for the Boys New series. Hale and Pace by their hand sports commentary (7) (233326)
 - 11.10pm Volcano: Fire on the Mountain (1997) Premiere. Dan Cortese stars in this disaster movie about an idyllic ski resort thrown into panic by the eruption of a nearby volcano. Directed by Gennaro Cornato (7) (83519)
 - 12.35pm The Cassandra Crossing (1976) A wounded terrorist carrying a deadly virus boards a transatlantic train, risking the lives of all on board. Disaster epic, starring Burt Lancaster and Martin Sheen. Directed by George Cosmatos (7) (88739)
 - 2.35pm BBC News (435552)
 - 2.40pm BBC News 24 (2467021)
- VIDEO Plus+ and VIDEO Plus+ codes**
The numbers after each programme are for VIDEO Plus+ programming. For more details on the VIDEO Plus+ video recorder for sale, see page 750710. For more details on the VIDEO Plus+ video recorder, see page 750710. VIDEO Plus+ is a registered trademark of the Development Corporation © 1998

- BBC2**
- 7.00am Children's BBC Breakfast Show: Dilly the Dinosaur (7845439) 7.05am Teletubbies (2201896) 7.30pm Yogi's Treasure Hunt (2594963) 7.50pm The Ready, Set, Go! Show (316148) 8.20pm The Mervyn Show (810148) 8.40pm The Mervyn Show (810148) 8.55pm Dilly the Dinosaur (858070) 9.00pm The Mervyn Show (810148) 9.10pm The Phil Silvers Show (529419) 10.00pm Children's BBC Teletubbies (41693) 10.30pm The Battle of Britain (42064) 12.30pm News: Weather (7) (81148) 1.00pm The Mervyn Show (810148)
 - 1.10pm The Arts and Crafts Hour Francine Stock looks at antique clocks (272148)
 - 2.10pm Darts: World Professional Championship Highlights of yesterday's second-round matches. Includes News at 2.40 and 3.25 (8837663)
 - 3.30pm Wildlife on Two (728)
 - 5.30pm Star Trek: The Next Generation A boy rescued from a wrecked spacecraft claims aliens attacked the ship — but is he telling the truth? (7) (462322)
 - 6.45pm Buffy the Vampire Slayer A series of unpleasant accidents disrupts the cheerleader auditions (7) (23525)
 - 7.30pm Tales from the Riverbank Geoffrey Palmer looks at all aspects of angling, spending a summer day fishing a trout stream (7) (877)
- HTV**
- 5.30am ITN Morning News (87544)
 - 6.00am GMTV (608186)
 - 9.25pm Trisha (7) (236312)
 - 10.25pm This Morning (7) (6281631)
 - 12.15pm ITN Lunchtime News (7) (832635)
 - 12.30pm ITN Lunchtime News (7) (42542)
 - 1.00pm WEST: Next Stop Local news update from Shepton Mallet, presented by Richard Wyatt and Polly Lloyd (82438)
 - 1.00pm WEST: Shortland Street (82438)
 - 1.30pm Home and Away Gypsy duets Will's sincerity (7) (82638)
 - 2.00pm The Jerry Springer Show Outrageous anything-goes talk show (7) (2166341)
 - 2.45pm The Jerry Springer Show (7) (73612)
 - 3.15pm ITN News Headlines (7) (2263612)
 - 3.20pm ITN News (7) (2263612)
 - 3.25pm HTV: Mopatt's Shop (2240148) 3.35pm Teddycats (878207) 3.45pm January (879728) 4.10pm Whizzang (8837051)
 - 4.40pm Mad for It (737693)
 - 5.10pm A Country Practice Terence and Rosemary's plans go to pot (4202934)
 - 5.40pm ITN Early Evening News: Weather (7) (31993)
 - 5.59pm HTV CrimeStoppers (373322)
 - 6.00pm Home and Away Gypsy duets Will's sincerity (7) (81612)
 - 6.25pm WEST: Wales Tonight: Weather (7) (16532)
 - 6.25pm WEST: HTV Weather (900148)
 - 6.30pm WEST: The West Tonight (7) (419)
 - 7.00pm Emmerdale Terry turns down Viv's offer (7) (8544)
 - 7.30pm Coronation Street Alf's funeral proves a trying occasion for Audrey (7) (831)
 - 8.00pm Who Wants to be a Millionaire? Big-prize game show (7) (4964)
 - 8.30pm Police, Camera, Action! The pursuit of a runaway coach on the M1 and a car thief who's 15mph over his limit (7) (3038)
- As HTV West except:**
- 12.15-12.27pm Westcountry News: Weather (8626235)
 - 12.27-12.30pm Illuminations (6250902)
 - 1.00pm Emmerdale (82438)
 - 1.30pm The Jerry Springer Show (8271438)
 - 2.15-2.45pm Home and Away (174341)
 - 3.20-3.25pm Westcountry News: Weather (2260525)
 - 5.08pm Birthday People (8857032)
 - 5.10-5.40pm Home and Away (4202934)
 - 6.00-7.00pm Westcountry Live (86693)
 - 10.30-10.40pm Westcountry News: Weather (79693)
- As HTV West except:**
- 12.15-12.30pm Meridian News: Weather (8626235)
 - 1.00-1.30pm Shortland Street (82438)
 - 5.10-5.40pm Home and Away; 6.00pm Meridian Tonight (167)
 - 6.30-7.00pm Birdwatch (419)
 - 10.30-10.40pm Meridian News: Weather (79693)
 - 10.40-10.50pm Newsround (4684)
- As HTV West except:**
- 12.15pm Anglia Air Watch (6221400)
 - 12.20-12.30pm Anglia News and Weather (6242953)
 - 1.00-1.35pm Up Shod (1595056)
 - 5.10-5.40pm Shortland Street (4202934)
 - 6.24pm Anglia Weather (99187)
 - 6.25-7.00pm Anglia News (165032)
 - 10.25pm Anglia Air Watch (81777)
 - 10.30-10.40pm Anglia News and Weather (79693)
- Starts:** 5.55am Sesame Street (4538032) 7.00pm The Big Breakfast (7226156) 8.00pm The Cosby Show (7) (16827032) 9.30pm The Cruel Sea (7) (1407694) 11.50pm Earthquake (7) (8883423) 12.00pm Here's One I Made Earlier (7) (1684786) 12.30pm Sesame Street (3883207) 1.00pm Planned Plant (7) (5403544) 1.50pm The Big Breakfast (7226156) 2.30pm The Cruel Sea (7) (1407694) 3.30pm The Cruel Sea (7) (1407694) 4.30pm The Cruel Sea (7) (1407694) 5.30pm The Cruel Sea (7) (1407694) 6.30pm The Cruel Sea (7) (1407694) 7.30pm The Cruel Sea (7) (1407694) 8.30pm The Cruel Sea (7) (1407694) 9.30pm The Cruel Sea (7) (1407694) 10.30pm The Cruel Sea (7) (1407694) 11.30pm The Cruel Sea (7) (1407694) 12.30pm The Cruel Sea (7) (1407694)

- CENTRAL**
- As HTV West except:
 - 12.15-12.27pm Westcountry News: Weather (8626235)
 - 12.27-12.30pm Illuminations (6250902)
 - 1.00pm Emmerdale (82438)
 - 1.30pm The Jerry Springer Show (8271438)
 - 2.15-2.45pm Home and Away (174341)
 - 3.20-3.25pm Westcountry News: Weather (2260525)
 - 5.08pm Birthday People (8857032)
 - 5.10-5.40pm Home and Away (4202934)
 - 6.00-7.00pm Westcountry Live (86693)
 - 10.30-10.40pm Westcountry News: Weather (79693)
- As HTV West except:**
- 12.15-12.30pm Meridian News: Weather (8626235)
 - 1.00-1.30pm Shortland Street (82438)
 - 5.10-5.40pm Home and Away; 6.00pm Meridian Tonight (167)
 - 6.30-7.00pm Birdwatch (419)
 - 10.30-10.40pm Meridian News: Weather (79693)
 - 10.40-10.50pm Newsround (4684)
- As HTV West except:**
- 12.15pm Anglia Air Watch (6221400)
 - 12.20-12.30pm Anglia News and Weather (6242953)
 - 1.00-1.35pm Up Shod (1595056)
 - 5.10-5.40pm Shortland Street (4202934)
 - 6.24pm Anglia Weather (99187)
 - 6.25-7.00pm Anglia News (165032)
 - 10.25pm Anglia Air Watch (81777)
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- CHANNEL 4**
- 5.55am Sesame Street (4056544)
 - 7.00pm The Big Breakfast (70893)
 - 9.00pm The Cosby Show (7) (81896)
 - 9.30pm Ten North Frederick (1958) Family drama, with Gary Cooper. Directed by Philip Dunne (7) (18273)
 - 11.30pm Here's One I Made Earlier (7) (3070)
 - 12.00pm Sesame Street (41032)
 - 12.30pm Bewitched (42524)
 - 1.00pm Pet Rescue The work of RSPCA centres (7) (7373)
 - 1.30pm Web Annotated short (7343506)
 - 1.35pm Golden Girl (1951) Musical about a woman who becomes a showbiz star, little realising the heartache waiting just around the corner. Mica Gaylor stars. Directed by Lloyd Bacon (7) (20425051)
 - 3.30pm Hampton Court Palace Joe Cowell describes the night, in 1888, when the palace caught fire (7) (825)
 - 4.00pm Fifteen-to-One Highlights (7) (772)
 - 4.30pm Countdown (7) (1985032)
 - 4.55pm Rick Lake (7) (4096490)
 - 5.30pm Pet Rescue The RSPCA team rescue a cat wedged underneath a bridge and rush it to the Ark for a check-up (7) (896)
 - 6.00pm Caroline in the City Del and Charlie find love in the laundrette and Caroline consults her boyfriend for advice about her poorly cat (869254)
 - 6.25pm Suddenly Susan A friend begins to take up too much of Susan's time, and Jack tries to improve work relations (667273)
 - 6.55pm Planet Pop Music News (783070)
 - 7.00pm Channel 4 News: Weather (7) (958099)
 - 7.55pm Cuban Faces What everyday life is like in Havana Vieja (35) (7) (803693)
 - 8.00pm Brookside Gemma has a shock in store (7) (2506)
 - 8.30pm The Real Holiday Show Three Glasgow pals take a trip to Turkey, the Canillies from Lancashire book a last-minute family holiday to Minorca, and a travel agent visits Jordan (78) (7) (4341)
- CHANNEL 5**
- 6.00am 5 News and Sport With Becky Anderson (7184341)
 - 7.00pm WorldWide The realities of rural life in Victorian England (7) (9266544)
 - 7.30pm Milkshake! (3502887)
 - 7.55pm Wimpie's House (7) (990457)
 - 8.00pm Hava Kazoo (7) (1330148)
 - 8.30pm Deppledown Farm (1339419)
 - 9.00pm Hot Property (1335098)
 - 9.30pm The Oprah Winfrey Show (6782693)
 - 10.20pm Sunset Beach (7) (2260341)
 - 11.10pm Loops (7) (227167)
 - 12.00pm 5 News at Noon (7) (1332335)
 - 12.30pm Family Affairs Annie tells Chris they're through (7) (7) (5 News Update (9109964)
 - 1.00pm The Bold and the Beautiful Sheila is found in a pool of blood (7) (9268815)
 - 1.30pm The Roseanne Show (9108235)
 - 2.00pm 100 Per Cent Gold (6529235)
 - 2.30pm Good Afternoon Daily entertainment, 5 News Update (4726099)
 - 3.30pm Joe Dancer — The Big Black Pill (TVM 1981) A private detective is wrongly accused of murder, and follows a trail of corruption that leads to a wealthy family. With Robert Blake and JoBeth Williams. Directed by Reza Badii (8895490)
 - 5.20pm Sunset Beach (7) (7) (6351419)
 - 6.00pm 100 Per Cent Gold (5480544)
 - 6.30pm Family Affairs Dave works his charm on Annie (7) (5471899)
 - 7.00pm 5 News: Weather (7) (6523051)
 - 7.30pm Champions of the Wild The work of the Tigers Forever project, which was set up to highlight the illegal trade in animal parts (7) (5480780)
 - 8.00pm The Pearly Gates From London's Sound Republic, presented by Dr Fox. Featuring a performance by the Lighthouse Family. 5 News Update (6549099)
 - 8.30pm Road Rages New series exploring the origin of the modern phenomenon of "road rage", and separating myth from reality surrounding such unknown quantities as female car owners and Sunday drivers (1/8) (7) (6528506)
 - 9.00pm Those Secrets (TVM 1991) A young mother is forced to resume her former life as a prostitute when her marriage falls apart. Emotional drama, with Paul Giamatti, Arliss Howard and Paul Giamatti. Directed by David Mamet; (7) 5 News Update (5244032)

For further listings see Saturday's Vision

SKY 1

- 7.00am Court Dusk (43231) 7.30pm Chris Evert 7.50pm The World's Best Tennis (1997) 8.30pm The World's Best Tennis (1997) 9.00pm The World's Best Tennis (1997) 9.30pm The World's Best Tennis (1997) 10.00pm The World's Best Tennis (1997) 10.30pm The World's Best Tennis (1997) 11.00pm The World's Best Tennis (1997) 11.30pm The World's Best Tennis (1997) 12.00pm The World's Best Tennis (1997) 12.30pm The World's Best Tennis (1997) 1.00am The World's Best Tennis (1997) 1.30am The World's Best Tennis (1997) 2.00am The World's Best Tennis (1997) 2.30am The World's Best Tennis (1997) 3.00am The World's Best Tennis (1997) 3.30am The World's Best Tennis (1997) 4.00am The World's Best Tennis (1997) 4.30am The World's Best Tennis (1997) 5.00am The World's Best Tennis (1997) 5.30am The World's Best Tennis (1997) 6.00am The World's Best Tennis (1997) 6.30am The World's Best Tennis (1997) 7.00am The World's Best Tennis (1997) 7.30am The World's Best Tennis (1997) 8.00am The World's Best Tennis 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World's Best Tennis (19



RUGBY UNION 36

Dallaglio gears up
Wasps to renew
challenge for title

SPORT

WEDNESDAY JANUARY 6 1999

SIMON BARNES 34

How young superstars
can so easily
fall back to earth



Bassett angry over dismissal Forest target Atkinson in survival fight

BY RICHARD HOBSON

THE uneasy and occasionally fractious relationship between Dave Bassett and the Nottingham Forest plc directors ended yesterday with an acrimonious departure from the club that he guided into the FA Cup Premiership last season.

Bassett had read of his impending dismissal in the morning newspapers before his worst fears were confirmed by Phil Soar, the chief executive.

Although Micky Adams, his assistant, has been placed in temporary charge for the visit to Coventry City on Saturday, the board will meet 24 hours earlier to discuss a replacement.

Ron Atkinson, at present on holiday in Bermuda, is the clear favourite, having shepherded Sheffield Wednesday to safety in 1997-98.

The task at Forest, in twentieth place and without a win in 17 league games, a Premiership record, would appear to be harder still.

Soar confirmed that Atkinson was among the candidates, but said that no contact had yet been made "to my knowledge". Any approach will come from Irving Scholar, the director in charge of the club's football affairs, who decided Bassett's fate.

In an unfortunate slip of the tongue as he read a prepared statement, Soar said that Bassett was leaving "by mutual consent", only to correct the error in his next breath. For once, the garrulous Bassett kept his observations succinct before he left the City Ground for the last time. The relative brevity of his comments amplified his frustration.

"Getting the sack is part and parcel of football. It is a volatile business and I am more upset at the way it has been done," Bassett, whose compensation payment may amount to several hundred thousand pounds, said.

"The club have done it in an undignified manner... to see

it in the papers and then have it confirmed is a rather rude way of doing business. It shows the difference in quality of dealing with people. When I was sacked by Elton John at Watford he called me to his agent's home. We sat down and sorted out the situation — we were both upset but realised what had to happen. We had a glass of champagne and remained friends." It is hard to imagine him sharing a drink with his latest employers.

Bassett was appointed as general manager of Forest in March 1997, a month after the club had been taken over by a five-man consortium that included Soar, Scholar and Nigel Wray, the owner of Saracens Rugby Football Club. He assumed full control after Stuart Pearce left for Newcastle United, when Forest slipped into the Nationwide League first division, and supervised an immediate return to the Premiership.

However, problems surfaced last summer with the sales of Colin Cooper and Kevin Campbell and the decision of Pierre van Hooijdonk to conduct a one-man strike in Holland.

Bassett was further aggrieved when the board paved the way for Van Hooijdonk to return two months into the season, having bought Neil Shipperley as a replacement for £1.5 million.

He felt that the Holland international forward would undermine morale and the pair never disguised a mutual antipathy.

While suggesting that "the majority of players think they have let Dave Bassett down", Adams admitted that "some are highly pleased" with his departure — a clear indication that all is not well in the dressing room.

Despite spending around £17 million in 22 months, Bassett felt more money needed to be made available as attempts to sign Brian Deane and Nathan Blake were scuppered on the grounds of cost.

Indeed, Atkinson may be reluctant to accept the job of saving Forest from a third relegation in seven seasons, knowing that any funds must be generated through sales. There is also unease among supporters, who have protested more vocally against the board than Bassett after each of the past two home games.

Wray, the majority shareholder and plc chairman, said on Monday that the bank would not give any more money. A share flotation last summer realised just £2 million. "This is where we are and we have to get out of it," Wray said.

Referring to the financial situation, Geoff Thomas, one of the most successful signings before injury took hold, said that Bassett "has been punished for something that was not in his control". He added: "Dave is one of the best motivators in the game. With the results we have had there was going to be a question mark, but whether somebody else can come in and turn it around... I don't know if that is the answer."

Hounded out, page 38

DAVID THRELL/ALLSPORT



Stewart, the England captain, third from left, and his players look on as Australia celebrate their victory in the fifth Test and the Ashes series

England revival gives Stewart opportunity to bat for Lloyd

FROM ALAN LEE, CRICKET CORRESPONDENT, IN SYDNEY

SYDNEY (fourth day of five): Australia beat England by 98 runs

EMBOLDENED by defeat in which there was, eventually, no dishonour, Alec Stewart yesterday made a plea for continuity in the management of the England team. His remarks may seem untimely on the day another Ashes series was lost 3-1, but Stewart recognised it as a moment in which he could speak from strength.

Stewart wants to continue in the captaincy when his appointment expires after the World Cup in June. Moreover, and far less likely, he wants David Lloyd to remain as coach and he is plainly prepared to bend a few ears to achieve it.

He used the after-match ceremony as his first platform, specifying in his speech what help he had enjoyed from Lloyd and adding: "I would like to think we'll go on working together for some while to come."

In the media conference that followed, he returned to the topic. "David Lloyd has done a tremendous job as coach and I hope he continues to do it," Stewart said.

This was the second calculating intervention Stewart has made on Lloyd's behalf in the space of four months. Back in September, as Lloyd wavered over his future after a second stern reprimand for public statements, Stewart sought out media outlets in which to voice his support of the coach.

Now, aware that there are those seeking a change, and that Lloyd's response to it has been to identify his own time to stand aside, Stewart has spoken out again. He chose his moment well, for this was a day, indeed a fortnight, on which England heads could be

held high, even in Australia. The final Test of a series far more memorable than had seemed likely ended 20 minutes after lunch on its fourth afternoon. The fantasy of an England victory faded fast once Stuart MacGill, upstaging Shane Warne once more, had eliminated the middle order on his way to match figures of 12 for 107.

It was an outcome that had seemed inevitable since England lost the toss, yet they had hurried themselves at Australia with such ferocity that, fleetingly, one of the most remarkable of all Test victories had been a possibility. So often, it has been the manner of defeat that

three Tests I hadn't seen much change in their cricket, but the last two were different."

A fourth morning of clear blue skies and hot sunshine brought another fine crowd, alive with expectation. Yesterday's attendance of 27,754 raised the match aggregate to 142,282, rescuing the budget of the Australian Board after the Boxing Day washout and three-day finish in Melbourne. It also proved beyond valid argument that the Ashes remains its status as the greatest of cricket's attractions.

It required optimism on a grand scale to believe England's eight remaining wickets would yield the 183 runs still required, but they had probably not bargained on losing one of their most important wickets to seam bowling. Glenn McGrath dismissed Mark Ramprakash through a smart, low catch at first slip by Taylor, taking him past Allan Border to the world catches record of 157. Warne opened from the other end and repeatedly spun the ball past the bat without reward. "He's not at his best yet," Taylor said. "As they say in racing, he will be better for the run, but although one leggie got 12 wickets and the other only two, I didn't think there was much between them."

Nasser Hussain was once again batting with great skill and intensity, working the ball into gaps for the singles that eluded his team-mates. It was a violent square drive for four, though, that saw McGrath out of the attack and ushered the game towards a rapid end.

MacGill, unrecognisable from the erratic bowler who began the series in Brisbane,

needed only nine balls to open his day's collection, bowling Graeme Hick behind his legs as he missed a sweep. Hussain, when 44, was missed by Healy off MacGill but it was Colin Miller, firing in his off breaks, who removed John Crawley with a questionable leg-before decision.

Warren Hegg, who has proved no more productive than his predecessors at No 7, too-ended a catch to Healy in straining to reach a long-hop from MacGill, who then effectively ended the contest by taking a return catch from Hussain as he checked a drive. The game squeezed past the lunch break and MacGill

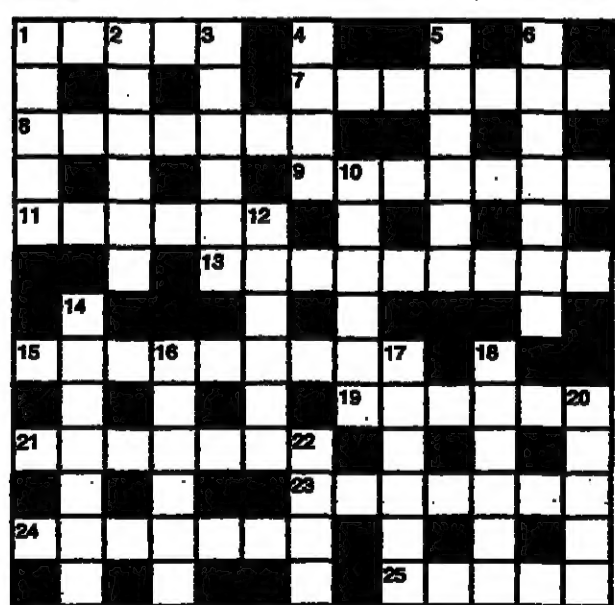
picked up the last three wickets in four overs. Tudor was bowled sweeping. Headley went to an instinctive grab from Healy and, finally, Such saw his powerful shot strike the heel of Slater, at silly point, and lob up for MacGill to catch in the style of a man who can do no wrong.

Stewart led his players across to the stand where England's more vocal supporters had chanted through four days. Then he spoke with honesty of a series that had slipped away before England began to play. "I think 3-1 was a fair reflection because we underperformed for the first three Tests," he said. "But when we are really up against it, we fight back well."



Bassett, left, returns from training to hear his fate yesterday

TIMES TWO CROSSWORD



No 1607

ACROSS

- 1 Be oblique (5)
- 2 Oppressive rule (7)
- 3 Within hearing (7)
- 4 Having extrasensory perception (7)
- 5 Without strength (6)
- 6 Obstreperous (9)
- 7 Full of passionate unreason (9)
- 8 Humbert's obsession (6)
- 9 Distorted (eg message) (7)
- 10 Quilo the capital (7)
- 11 Displaying no initiative (7)
- 12 Linger (5)

DOWN

- 1 Muffer (5)
- 2 Bad (egg) (6)
- 3 Romeo kills him (Shak.) (6)
- 4 Measure: stair (4)
- 5 Abandon, make void (6)
- 6 Very old (7)
- 7 Gregarious: like Rousseau's Contract (6)
- 8 White stout fur (6)
- 9 Muslim fasting month (7)
- 10 Place of lying in wait (6)
- 11 Plaguey grasshopper (6)
- 12 Load-bearing beam (6)
- 13 Regular, imposing display (5)
- 14 Profound (4)

SOLUTION TO NO 1606

- ACROSS: 7 Hypochondria 9 Rapport 10 Padre 11 Hoop 12 Typecast 15 Plymouth 17 Lift 19 Lathi 21 Overall 22 Get the hang of
- DOWN: 1 Symphony 2 Colon 3 Chatty 4 Snippet 5 Bred 6 Take its toll 8 Archipelago 13 Animator 14 Tonight 16 Trophy 18 Jenny 20 Tote

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FA rules dictate long campaign

Matt Dickinson says
candidates for the
FA chairmanship are
biding their time

THOSE who believe that the Football Association should press ahead with the appointment of a new chairman immediately, rather than waiting until the summer, received powerful backing yesterday from one of the leading candidates for the position. David Sheepshanks, chairman of Ipswich Town and one of the favourites to succeed Keith Waisman, who resigned on Monday, believes the interim period is unhelpful.

"It is a pity that it will take so long," he said, "but the constitution of the FA only allows the election of the chairman once a year, at its annual meeting."

That will ensure five months of electioneering until the vote in June but none of the expected candidates would declare their hand yesterday for fear of being seen as too eager. "I am flattered by the attention in the press," Sheepshanks said, "but we will have to wait and see. It is a huge job with a lot of challenges to be

met on and off the field." There seems little doubt, though, that the old Etonian will stand.

However, his position would be complicated should Ipswich Town win promotion from the Nationwide League first division this season. As one of the Football League's representatives on the FA Council, Sheepshanks would have to seek re-election either through his local association or from the Premier League.

Geoff Thompson, who is deputising as chairman until June, has yet to declare

his hand but seems certain to stand, while David Dein, vice-chairman of Arsenal, and Dave Richards, chairman of Sheffield Wednesday, will canvas opinion from Premiership chairmen first.

Next week, the FA's executive committee will have the first look at a working party's proposals for reform of the association. These are expected to include a plan to cut drastically the number of councillors from the amateur game by merging county associations into larger regions. How much power the FA Cup Premiership clubs should wield is certain to cause lively debate as will suggestions that Waisman's successor should become the organisation's first paid chairman.

Applications for the post of chief executive will also be sifted through next week, and it has to be decided whether the appointment should be made before or after the issue of the chairmanship is resolved.

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